

Major Iraqi opposition group rejects U.S. support

CAIRO (AP) — A prominent Iraqi opposition group on Wednesday turned down support offered by U.S. President Bill Clinton under the Iraq Liberation Act. The rejection came from the Tehran-based Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, an umbrella for several Shiite groups. "We don't get support under this act," said Hamid Bayati, the council's representative in London. "We haven't asked for it, and nobody took our opinion about it." Bayati added that "receiving such support from America would harm the opposition's reputation inside Iraq." He also said in a telephone interview with The Associated Press in Cairo that the people in Iraq "will accuse any organisation which gets such support of being directly connected with America."

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية "الرأي"

'King to meet with Netanyahu'

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and King Hussein have agreed to meet soon but have yet to set a date, Netanyahu's spokesman said on Wednesday. The King returned to Jordan on Tuesday to a tumultuous welcome after a six-month absence for cancer treatment in the United States. The two leaders last met in October at negotiations of the U.S.-brokered Wye River Middle East peace deal in Maryland. "King Hussein... called Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [Wednesday] morning to thank him for his warm wishes for a speedy recovery. The two agreed to meet soon," Netanyahu's spokesman Aviv Bushinsky said in a statement.

Volume 24 Number 7050

AMMAN THURSDAY-FRIDAY, JANUARY 21-22, 1999, SHAWWAL 4-5, 1419

Price: Jordan 200 Fils

'Iraqi FM to attend Arab League meeting'

CAIRO (AFP) — Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al-Sahhaf will attend Sunday's Arab League ministerial meeting here which will be devoted to the Iraqi crisis. League spokesman Talaat Hamed said on Wednesday. Hamed told reporters that Baghdad had informed the League of Sahhaf's participation in the one-day foreign ministers' meeting in Cairo which will discuss "all aspects of the Iraqi crisis." The meeting was called by Yemen to discuss also the possibility of convening an Arab summit following the four-day U.S.-British air campaign against Iraq. But the chances of holding a summit were sharply reduced when Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries announced their opposition to such a forum if Iraq is invited to attend.

Iraqi opposition groups eligible for U.S. support

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bill Clinton has designated seven organisations opposed to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to receive U.S. support under the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998. "The president has made clear that the only long-term solution to the challenge posed by Saddam Hussein is a change of leadership in Baghdad," National Security Council spokesman David Leavy said Tuesday. "Today's report is a first step in that effort." The groups named were: Iraqi National Congress, Iraqi National Congress, Islamic Movement of Iraq, Kurdistan, the Kurdistan Democratic Party, Movement for a Constitutional Monarchy, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, and the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq.

India says foils bomb attack on U.S. embassy

NEW DELHI (R) — Indian police said on Wednesday they had arrested four people for alleged plans to bomb the United States embassy in New Delhi and its consulates in two other Indian cities. "One man was arrested in Delhi, and three from Calcutta," a police spokesman told Reuters. The man arrested in Delhi was identified as Sayed Abu Nasir, a Bangladeshi national. Police officials quoted city police chief V.N. Singh as saying that six others wanted by the police were believed to be associated with Saudi millionaire and dissident Osama Ben Laden, who was targeted by the United States in missile attacks on Islamist camps in Afghanistan last year.

Colombia rebels suspend peace talks

BOGOTA (R) — Colombia's recent peace process was in turmoil on Wednesday after Marxist rebels suspended talks in what was seen as a ploy to impose a tough negotiating agenda rather than an immediate threat to go back to the battlefield. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) said late on Tuesday they were putting talks on hold — less than two weeks after they were officially launched — accusing the government of backing ultra-right death squads that massacred 140 people in a four-day blood bath earlier this month. The FARC insist they will only resume preliminary negotiations when President Andres Pastrana brings the paramilitary squads to heel, arguing that the illegal gangs are part of the state's undercover, counterinsurgency policy.

King considering means of enhancing country's stability, democracy

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein reiterated on Wednesday that his primary concern is for Jordan's people, stability, progress and democracy.

In an interview with CNN, the day after his return home after a six-month absence during which he underwent chemotherapy treatment, the King said he was considering "what can we do to give Jordanians reassurance that the future is secure and is built on love and cooperation and understanding and not intimidation."

Asked about what he meant in a recent address to the nation by a "comprehensive review" of Jordanian policies, the King said "my concern is not for me but for Jordan, its stability, its progress, its democracy [and] its people."

Asked about speculation about a change in the succession to the Throne, the King said he was not prepared to say what he had in mind for the time being.

"Please do not commit me to anything whatsoever because I really have not come up with [a decision]," the King said. "I have only thoughts and ideas... I have always had to take the final decisions and although this has been contested at times, it is my responsibility and I will come to it in the appropriate time."

The King spoke of the positive contribution made by HRH Crown Prince Hassan, but added that he thought "a Crown Prince has to work in the background to a very large extent, I gave him maybe more than he would normally have... because he has to be the reserve."

Prince Hassan, 51, was named Crown Prince in April 1965.

Recalling that date, the King told CNN in the interview which was also broadcast by Jordan Television last night: "I thought at a certain point of time there was no substitute but to find a member of the family close by to take over... and it was I, who did bring about and canvass for the alternative in our Constitution to enable a brother to take over."

But, the King said, that did not mean that it was "the end of the story." Originally, Article 28 of the Constitution instructs that "The Royal title shall pass from the holder of the Throne to his eldest son, and to the eldest son of that son and in linear succession by a similar process thereafter. Should the eldest son die before the Throne devolves upon him, his eldest son shall inherit the Throne, despite the existence of brothers, to the deceased son." In 1965, the article was amended and a clause added allowing the

King to name one of his brothers as heir.

Prince Hassan was chosen at a time of regional upheaval.

In a recent interview with HRH Prince Abdullah Ben Al Hussein, Prince Abdullah said the King took the decision to appoint Prince Hassan because there were fears for the King's life then.

"I've come back with a lot of thoughts and ideas... but I think they are speculations until they become fact," the King said.

Agence France Presse (AFP) yesterday quoted political sources as saying that King Hussein was planning to separate the role of heir to the Throne from the responsibilities of a regent running the country during his absence abroad.

"King Hussein is planning that from now on the Crown Prince will simply be the Monarch's reserve, and that he will no longer be involved in current affairs," the source told AFP.

The King emphasised in the CNN interview that he wanted to ensure Jordan would leave a mark in the Middle East and that he did not want Jordanians to be "a broken people as we see in so many parts of the world."

(See excerpts of the interview, printed out from CNN's website, on page 3).

Iraq submits critique of U.S. justification for no-fly zones

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Iraq has sent the United Nations an 11-page critique of the no-fly zones over northern and southern Iraq, saying they have no legal basis.

Iraq warned that it has the right to protect itself against the "continuous act of aggression." Iraq has routinely complained about the U.S. and British-protected no-fly zones, but Tuesday's letter was unusual both in its length and its detail.

It also represented a swansong of sorts for Baghdad's outgoing U.N. ambassador, Nizar Hamdoun, who has been engaged in years of heated exchanges with the Security Council over international restraints imposed following Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Hamdoun is returning to Baghdad to take up a position in the foreign ministry.

In his letter, Hamdoun presented a near line-by-line critique of the American justification for the no-fly zones contained in "talking points" he said were given recently to

Security Council members to explain Washington's position.

The explanation, Hamdoun said, was delivered in the wake of the almost daily clashes in recent weeks between Iraqi forces and U.S. warplanes patrolling the zones, which the United States and its allies imposed after the Gulf war to protect minority Kurds in the north and Shiite Muslims in the south.

Washington has argued it has the legal right to patrol the airspace based on Security Council resolutions that allow U.N. member states to "use all necessary means" to uphold U.N. resolutions regarding peace and security in the region.

Hamdoun, however, said there was no resolution that explicitly authorised the no-fly zones. "It is quite clear that the position of the United States is completely unfounded," Hamdoun wrote.

As such, he said, Iraq has the right under international law "to exercise its legitimate right

to self-defence against such a continuous act of aggression."

Since last month's U.S. and British airstrikes, Baghdad has increased its challenge of the no-fly zones, as well as U.N. weapons inspections and the U.N. humanitarian programme in Iraq.

Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz has also called into question the borders of Kuwait — a move which has raised serious concern within the Security Council and Kuwait itself.

"The source of our concern is the attacks of Iraq on the leaders of the region, plus the fact that we are reinvoking the atmosphere that existed in 1990, prior to the occupation of Kuwait," Bahrain's U.N. Ambassador Jassem Mohammad Bualayl said Tuesday.

He spoke to reporters after the council president, Ambassador Celso Amorim of Brazil, told members about a meeting he had with Iraqi diplomats to convey the council's concern about an article Aziz wrote in the Al Thawra newspaper.



His Majesty King Hussein, accompanied by His Royal Highness Prince Ali, receives the chief-of-staff of the United Arab Emirates armed forces, Mohammad Ben Zayed Al Nahayan, and the crown prince of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammad Ben Rashed Al Maktoum, at his residence at Bab Al Salam (Photo by Yousef Allam)

King receives UAE, Bahraini officials

Arab, world leaders send messages of congratulations

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Wednesday received messages and telephone calls from heads of state and government leaders of Arab and foreign countries congratulating him on his full recovery and safe return to Jordan.

The King received a telephone call from King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, who wished him continued good health and happiness and further progress and prosperity for the Jordanian people.

The King in reply expressed deep appreciation to the Saudi monarch and feelings reflecting the strong ties between the two countries. King Hussein wished King Fahd continued good health.

King Hussein received a telephone call from Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi, who congratulated the King on his recovery and voiced appreciation for King Hussein's national stand with regard to pan-Arab causes.

The King thanked Qadhafi, wishing him and his people continued success and prosperity.

Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah, emir of Kuwait, sent a message to King Hussein congratulating him on his recovery and safe return.

"We are delighted to see you return to your home and people to resume Jordan's march towards peace and towards further achievements," the Kuwaiti leader said.

The emir of Bahrain, Isa Ben Salman Al Khalifeh, sent a message to the King congratulating him on his recovery and wishing him good health and happiness.

Messages of good wishes and congratulations were also sent by the Chinese president, Czech President Vaclav Havel, the prime minister of Bahrain, the deputy prime minister and foreign minister of Kuwait, Prince Salman Ben Abdul Aziz, prince of

Riyadh, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, and Israeli President Ezer Weizman and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Also Wednesday, King Hussein received at his residence at Bab Al Salam the crown prince of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammad Ben Rashed Al Maktoum, the

chief of staff of the United Arab Emirates armed forces, Mohammad Ben Zayed Al Nahayan, UAE Minister of Information and Culture Abdullah Ben Zayed Al Nahayan, and commander of the National Guards of Bahrain, Mohammad Ben Isa Al Khalifeh.

They conveyed to the King greetings and congratulations from the UAE and Bahraini leaders.

The King voiced his appreciation of the Arab leaders' feelings and asked the delegations to convey his greetings to their leaders.

Attending the audience was

well as welcoming and seeing off the envoys when they departed were Their Royal Highnesses Princes Abdullah, Faisal, Hashem, and Ghazi Ben Mohammad, the King's advisor for tribal affairs, and Samih Baukhi, director of the General Intelligence Department.

In a statement upon arrival, Sheikh Mohammad Ben Rashed Al Maktoum said: "We have come to congratulate the King on his safe return to his country. He is like a father to us, and we have very strong ties with His Majesty."

Describing Jordanian-UAE relations as excellent, Sheikh Mohammad added: "We are honoured to come here and meet His Majesty to congratulate him on his safe return to his country and people. We thank God for his safety."

Sheikh Mohammad said "relations between our two countries will be continually strengthened."

Clinton asks Congress to approve aid to Jordan

By Caroline Faraj

AMMAN — U.S. President Bill Clinton on Tuesday asked Congress to approve extra aid to Jordan.

"I ask Congress to provide resources so that all parties can implement the Wye Agreement, to protect Israel's security, stimulate the Palestinian economy and support our friends in Jordan," Clinton said in his annual State of the Union address.

He also said that "all Americans can be proud that our leadership has renewed hope for lasting peace in the Middle East."

The extra assistance to Jordan was the main issue of discussion during His Majesty King Hussein's meeting with President Clinton on Jan. 5 at the White House.

"The U.S. administration has pledged to seek from Congress an extra \$100 million in economic assistance funds to Jordan," the Kingdom's ambassador to Washington, Marwan Muasher, told the Jordan Times on Jan. 11.

Muasher said the American administration reacted to the King's argument by pledging to seek an extra \$100 million in economic assistance that will be divided over two years.

"We expect to receive the first extra \$50 million in October 1999, and the rest in October 2000," Muasher said.

Last year, the U.S. Congress agreed to allocate \$225 million to Jordan in 1999, \$150 million in economic assistance and \$75 million in military aid.

During a brief visit to Amman on Dec. 15, U.S. Sec-

retary of State Madeleine Albright pledged to seek from Congress an extra \$200 million in security assistance funds to "bolster Jordan's ability to cope with regional turmoil."

The extra \$200 million is to be divided over three years (approximately \$66 million per year).

Muasher explained that should Congress approve the additional packages, the Kingdom would receive a total of \$341 million, \$200 million in economic and \$141 million in military aid, in 1999.

EU still considering how to deal with Palestinian statehood declaration

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — The European Union (EU) denied Wednesday that it was pressuring Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to delay his plans to proclaim an independent state from May until the end of the year.

"For now, the EU has no position on this issue," the EU's special Middle East envoy, Miguel Moratinos, told AFP.

"We are in discussions on the matter with both parties," said Moratinos, who was in Jerusalem with visiting Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern (see story on page 2).

Moratinos was responding to remarks by a senior member of Israel's opposition Labour Party, Yossi Beilin, who said the 15-nation EU had agreed to issue a public appeal for Arafat to delay his statehood declaration.

Beilin told Israel Radio earlier in the day that the EU had adopted a pro-

posal he has been promoting for months, to break the deadlock in the peace process and avert a major confrontation in May.

"Under my proposal, Israel will declare itself ready to recognise a demilitarised Palestinian state, without its borders and its capital being defined, and to leave 50 per cent of the West Bank, if that state is proclaimed on January 1, 2000," Beilin said.

Later Wednesday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that even if Arafat postpones a declaration of statehood until the end of the year, Israel will not resume West Bank troop withdrawals promised in recent peace accords.

Netanyahu, who staunchly opposes Palestinian statehood, told reporters that it is not enough for Arafat to postpone the declaration.

Netanyahu said he must agree to negotiate on a permanent settlement,

and also carry out other commitments he made in the Wye accord, such as clamping down on Islamists opposed to peace with Israel.

"If he carries out all his commitments... then yes, I think we would be able to move forward," Netanyahu told reporters.

The Palestinians maintain that they are carrying out their obligations and have accused Netanyahu of putting off the withdrawals in an attempt to win votes from hardline nationalists when he is up for reelection May 17.

Netanyahu made his comments while campaigning at Jerusalem's Mahane Yehuda street market, a stronghold of right-wing support.

The right-wing government of Netanyahu has vowed to respond severely to a unilateral declaration of independence, notably by annexing parts of the West Bank still under Israeli control.

Beilin said that under the plan he put to leaders of the European Union, the EU would promise Arafat to support Palestinian independence and press Israel to stop building Jewish settlements in occupied areas in exchange for a seven-month delay in his statehood declaration.

Moratinos insisted, however, that official EU policy at this point stopped short of backing Palestinian independence, an issue he said should be negotiated between the Palestinians and Israelis.

"We respect the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and do not exclude the option of statehood," he said.

The Palestinians assert that they have the right to declare a state May 4, when the five-year interim period set out in the Oslo peace accords expires.

They have become more determined to act unilaterally given the

Netanyahu government's refusal to carry out further Israeli withdrawals from the West Bank required by the U.S.-brokered Wye River peace accord signed in October.

Netanyahu has frozen the Wye accord, accusing the Palestinians of violating their security promises under the agreement.

Saeed Erekat, the chief Palestinian negotiator with Israel, said Arafat did not rule out a possible postponement of the statehood declaration under certain conditions.

He told AFP that if the United States, Europe or other countries which sponsored the Oslo peace accord "meet and propose something definite, the Palestinian leadership is ready to study it."

But he said these governments would also have to take "a clear position to force Israel to stop unilateral actions, especially Jewish settlement

activity, and to implement [the] Wye River agreement."

"They also have to declare their support for the Palestinian right to self-determination, which means clearly an independent state within the 1967 borders and with Jerusalem as its capital," he said.

Palestinian officials and Western diplomats said earlier this week that the United States, backed by Europe, has put forward a proposal to delay any statehood declaration until the end of the year in exchange for international support for Palestinian self-determination.

Washington, Europe and the Labour Party fear that the tensions created by a May 4 declaration by Arafat would boost the chances of Netanyahu and other Israeli hardliners in national elections scheduled for May 17.

Irish PM calls for implementation of Israeli-Palestinian peace accord

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern called Wednesday for the implementation of the Wye River accord calling for two more Israeli withdrawals from the West Bank.

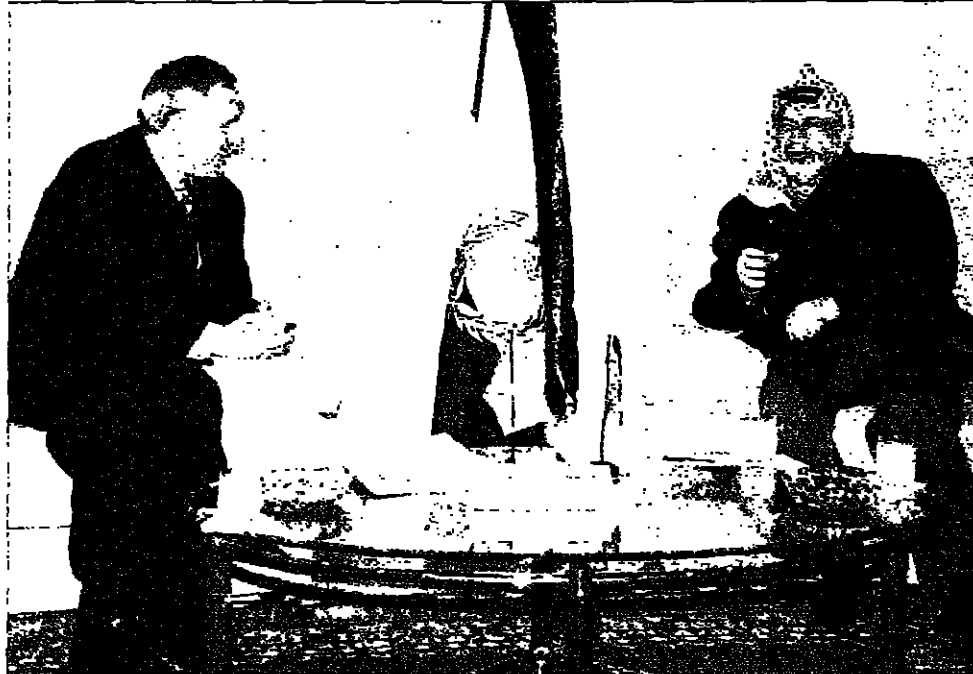
"What was negotiated should be implemented," Ahern told reporters after a meeting in Gaza City with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

"I reported to President Arafat what was said to me, that the [Israeli] prime minister was prepared to negotiate and that the Wye River agreement was not frozen," said Ahern, who held talks with Benjamin Netanyahu Tuesday.

The Israeli prime minister carried out the first military redeployment after the Wye accord was signed in October. But he has put off indefinitely the further pullbacks scheduled for December and January, saying the Palestinians have not done enough to ensure Israeli security.

Commentators said the accord will be frozen until Israeli general elections May 17.

Arafat has said many times that he will proclaim an independent state May 4, at the end of the interim period of Palestinian autonomy under the Oslo accords, but has



Palestinian President Yasser Arafat speaks with Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern on Wednesday at Gaza International Airport in Rafah, in the Gaza Strip. Ahern, who arrived from Tel Aviv, is ending a four-day trip to the Middle East (AFP photo)

been under pressure to delay the announcement until after the Israeli elections.

May 4 "is a sacred date for the Palestinians and for all the area in the Middle East," Arafat said Wednesday.

Netanyahu has said that if Arafat goes ahead with such a unilateral move, Israel will annex part of the West Bank.

Ahern flew into Gaza

international airport from Tel Aviv Wednesday after visiting the grave of slain Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem and the nearby Yad Vashem memorial to the Holocaust.

He also met Netanyahu and former Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

During his four-day trip to

the Middle East, Ahern has also visited Irish troops serving with the United Nations in south Lebanon and met Lebanese Prime Minister Salim Hoss.

Ahern is due to fly directly back to Dublin from Gaza Thursday, becoming one of the few foreign leaders to spend a night in the territory.

Israeli leaders discuss Pollard issue with Washington

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel's opposition leader said Wednesday he had contacted the White House to discuss the case of convicted Israeli spy Jonathan Pollard — a sign of the increasing politicisation of the case in Israel.

Opposition leader Ehud Barak told Israel Radio he had spoken with the White House Tuesday night about the case. He would not give details.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said this week he was preparing a letter to be sent to U.S. President Bill Clinton.

The fight for Pollard's release has become a centre of the campaign for Israeli national elections, slated for May 17. A popular movement to release Pollard has existed since his arrest in 1985.

Clinton had promised Netanyahu in October that he would review the case of the former U.S. Navy analyst. Netanyahu had made the review a condition of signing the Wye peace accord with the Palestinians.

Netanyahu recently wrote a letter to Clinton asking him to "put this unfortunate chapter behind us." He asked his political rival, Ehud Barak, to sign.

Barak, who believes public appeals amount to counter-

productive badgering, refused.

"I am really thinking of Pollard and am still dealing with him in recent days," Barak told Israel Radio. "President Clinton knows my view and what needs to be done on this."

Netanyahu on Wednesday reiterated his call for Barak to sign. He had said earlier Barak's refusal "saddened and disappointed" him.

Barak lashed out at Netanyahu for what he said was the issue's politicisation. "Netanyahu is not dealing with Pollard," he said. "He is willing to sacrifice Pollard and to impress people on television. He knows... this only puts off his release."

A native of South Bend, Indiana, Pollard was convicted to life imprisonment in 1985 for giving Israel tens of thousands of top-secret documents.

Netanyahu's request for Pollard's release at the peace talks nearly derailed the U.S.-brokered Mideast accords.

Under last-minute pressure, Clinton promised to review Pollard's case. However, top U.S. officials, including Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, have advised against an early release.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Algerian cleric condemns Coca Cola

ALGIERS (AFP) — Coca Cola is sinful and illicit, according to an Algerian Muslim cleric quoted Wednesday in an Algiers daily. The imam pronounced the fatwa or religious edict at prayers held during the Holy Month of Ramadan, which ended in Algeria on Sunday, the Sawt Al Ahmar reported. The imam's explanations were not recorded but the paper noted he was known for his extreme views, including the conviction that women are "the source of all the world's ills." Pepsi came on to the market here six months ago. The imam's remarks on Coke's arch rival were not recorded.

'Saddam fails to realise he's a loser'

RIYADH (AFP) — Iraqi President Saddam Hussein fails to realise that he has lost all his showdowns with the United States ever since the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, a Saudi newspaper said Wednesday. "The latest crisis in Iraq is a crisis at the intelligence level of the Iraqi regime," said the daily Al Madina, which in general reflects the official Saudi view. "The Iraqi regime has proved that it is clearly incapable of learning its lesson," from the invasion of Kuwait that led to Iraq's defeat in the 1991 Gulf War, it said. Al Madina said Saddam had "come out the loser in all its confrontations" with the United States. "The Iraqi regime is incapable of facing the changes on the international scene or even of realising that the United States is now the only superpower after the collapse of the former Soviet Union."

Japan PM worried over Mideast peace

TOKYO (AFP) — Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi Wednesday raised deep concern over stalled Middle East peace talks in a meeting with the visiting Jerusalem mayor, officials said. Obuchi expressed "deep concern" at the loss of the constructive climate towards peace, said foreign ministry officials after the 20-minute meeting at the premier's office. The prime minister also noted the sensitivity of Jerusalem itself in his meeting with the mayor, Ehud Olmert, who arrived in Japan Sunday for a week-long visit, they said. Obuchi said he hoped Israel would avoid any action that might cause friction.

Sharon urges Moscow not to help Iran

MOSCOW (AP) — Visiting Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon urged Russia on Wednesday to block alleged deals of weapons technologies by Russian companies to Iran, and to combat a recent wave of anti-Semitism by Russian lawmakers. Sharon also appealed to Russia to use its influence in the Middle East — namely, its good ties with Arab countries — to promote peace in the region. During a meeting with his Russian counterpart Igor Ivanov the two also discussed boosting Israeli-Russian trade and political relations. "I am above all interested in seeing the only Jewish state in the world remain secure," Sharon told reporters after the meeting.

Canada submits proposal on Iraq

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — Canada on Tuesday sent U.N. Security Council members a letter proposing changes to break the organisation's stalemate on Iraq sanctions. To unblock the debate, Canada is proposing that the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) monitoring Iraqi weapons programmes and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) meet under the chairmanship of a U.N. official. Jayantha Dhanapala, to evaluate progress made in Iraq's disarmament. Ottawa also proposed a meeting between the bureau for the Iraqi humanitarian programme and the sanctions committee, a meeting which would be chaired by the U.N. official in charge of humanitarian affairs, Sergio Vieira de Mello.

Yemeni tribesmen damage pipeline

SANAA (AP) — Yemeni tribesmen have again damaged a pipeline operated by the American Hunt Oil Co., Yemeni security officials said Wednesday. An explosive device detonated late Tuesday set the pipeline ablaze, they said. The fire, which was still burning Wednesday, was being fed by crude leaking from the broken line. There were no reports of casualties. Tribesmen have targeted the Hunt Oil line in the past. Last month, tribesmen set off an explosive device that damaged the pipeline to try to force the government to improve services to the area.

Boat people in Cyprus go on hunger strike ahead of court appearance

NICOSIA (AFP) — Thirteen members of the latest group of boat people to reach Cyprus's shores began a hunger strike Wednesday, one day before they are scheduled to appear in court, police and the United Nations said.

The 13, who are being held in the eastern town of Paralimni, have gone on hunger strike but 10 others from the same boat, who are being held in the southern city of Larnaca, have not joined them, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees said.

Police said the hunger strike's objective was not immediately clear.

The boat people, whose week-long remand in custody was set to expire Thursday, are scheduled to appear in Larnaca court the same day, police said.

But the police said they were uncertain whether the court would extend the remand period or order deportation. It is unclear where they could be sent.

A total of 29 illegal immigrants arrived in the Konnos

area near the south-eastern resort of Ayia Napa Wednesday night.

They told police they boarded a boat in the northern Lebanese port of Tripoli and paid up to \$2,000 for the voyage, expecting to be taken to Greece or Italy.

Cypriot authorities took the illegal immigrants by police launch back into Lebanese waters, but Lebanon dispatched gunboats to prevent them from landing in the port of Beirut.

After intervention by the

Cypriot foreign ministry, the Lebanese authorities eventually allowed six of the boat people — all of them Egyptians — to enter the country.

The launch was forced to return to Cyprus with the remaining 23 — 18 Iraqis, most of them Kurds, two Somalis, a Burundian, a Sri Lankan and one person from the Palestinian territories.

Illegal immigration has been on the rise on this eastern Mediterranean island, with most of the aliens arriving by boat from nearby Lebanon.

Iran slams U.S. for sanctions on Russian institutes

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran blasted the United States on Wednesday for slapping sanctions on Russian institutes accused of providing Tehran with nuclear technology, saying it was a "blatant example of interference."

"Iran's cooperation with these institutes was essentially scientific and industrial cooperation," said foreign ministry

spokesman Hamid-Reza Asefi.

"The charge of nuclear cooperation is propaganda by the United States to damage Iran's relations with Russia," he charged, quoted by the official Iranian news agency IRNA.

"This is a blatant example of interference in the domestic affairs of other countries," the spokesman added.

Iran's ambassador to Russia,

Mehdi Safari, on Saturday denounced as "disinformation" the U.S. allegations that Russia is transferring sensitive nuclear and missile technology to Iran.

The United States is "intimidated by our [Iran-Russia] cooperation and is trying to harm it by spreading all kinds of disinformation," he said.

Last week, Washington slapped economic sanctions on

three Russian scientific institutes which it accused of collaborating with Iran.

Russia has denied the allegations and has reacted with fury, arguing that the United States has failed to provide concrete evidence to support the claim.

The U.S. ban came on top of similar sanctions imposed against seven other Russian institutes last July.

'Satanic' U.S. trying to break up Iraq — paper

BAGHDAD (R) — An Iraqi newspaper on Wednesday lashed out at the "satanic" United States for trying to break up Iraq by its dealings in the Kurdish north of the country.

The official Al Iraq daily said U.S.-brokered agreements between Kurdish factions in the north of Iraq "came when America was escalating the crisis it manufactured against Iraq paving the way for the brutal aggression it launched."

"The phenomenon confirmed the desire of the United States to continue its conspiracy of dividing Iraq," the paper, a mouthpiece for pro-government Kurds, said, adding that the U.S. plan would fail.

It said the "mentality of the American Satan" aimed at silencing Kurdish opponents of the government in the north by offering agreements and paying them off with dollars.

In September, leaders of the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of

Kurdistan, the two main factions in the Western-protected north, announced a U.S.-brokered deal designed to end a long-running violent power struggle between them.

After the 1991 Gulf War, Western powers declared the area closed off to the Iraqi government and have enforced a "no-fly" zone for Iraqi aircraft over the region. On Sunday, Iraq said a U.S. State Department official had visited northern Iraq and condemned the trip as a "flagrant aggression and interference in Iraq's internal affairs."

The newspaper said the United States had "given the chance for the Turkish military to penetrate Iraqi land and made the so-called 'safe haven' an arena where it could work freely to realise its aggressive aims." Turkey has often sent troops into the area to strike bases it says are used by the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) in that groups' separatist struggle against Ankara.

JORDAN TELEVISION

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PROGRAMME TWO
Thursday Programmes

15:10 Cartoon — Superman
15:30 Science Fiction — Space Precinct
16:10 French Prog.
18:15 Omar Ben Abdul Aziz
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 French Prog.
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Family Matters
20:00 World's Muses
20:30 Drama — Dr Quinn the Medicine Woman
21:10 Mini Series — "Playing the Field" Eps. 4
22:00 News in English
22:30 Feature Film — "Asylum"

Friday Programmes
15:10 Cartoon — Plasmio
15:30 Treasure Hunt
18:15 Omar Ben Abdul Aziz
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Words of Wisdom
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
20:00 Cinema, Cinema
20:30 Drama — "Babylon-5"
21:10 Doc. — Full Circle
22:00 News in English
22:30 Drama — Millennium
23:10 Feature Film — "Attack of the 50 Foot Woman"

PRAYER TIMES

05:10 Fajr
06:31 (Sunrise) Doha
11:47 Dhur
14:39 Asr
17:03 Maghreb
18:24 Isha

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweilfel, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751
Armenian International Church Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweilfel Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 4771331
The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Cold weather conditions will prevail with temperatures rising slightly and skies cloudy to partly cloudy. Winds north-westerly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be cloudy to partly cloudy with expected scattered showers. Winds northerly moderate and seas rough.

Amman 05/12
Aqaba 10/20
Deserts 04/13
Jordan Valley 11/21

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 09, Aqaba 18
Humidity readings: Amman 85 per cent, Aqaba 42 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:
Ajloun 05/11
Jerash 06/14
Um Qays 04/13
Madaba 05/15
Petra 03/15
Dead Sea 11/21

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS
NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Farouq Noure 5601719
Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayyir 4630115

Dr. Hani Al Ahmad 4394336
Dr. Mukhlis Mazharah 5150312

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy 5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy 5537004
Rula Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID:
Dr. Ayman Abu Ideh 02424468
Fou'ad Pharmacy 021275360

ZARQA:
Dr. Ziyad Jghalim 09992991
Palestine Pharmacy 09983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192 4621111/4637777
Fire Brigade 4617101
Blood Bank 4775121
Highway Police 5343402
Traffic office 4896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Price Complaints 5605800
Water & Sewage Complaints 489467
Amman Municipality Complaints 4787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101
Jordan Television 4773111
Radio Jordan 4774111
Water Authority 5680100

J. Electricity Authority 5815615
Electric Power Co. 4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic, Abdli 5666131/7
Hussein Medical Centre 5856856
Luzmila 4630195
Khalidi Maternity 4642816
Akshid Maternity 4642412
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman 4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5607431
Jordan Hospital 5607550
University Hospital 5353444
Al-Musasher Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali 5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 4771013
Al-Bashir 4775111/26
Army, Marka 4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5157100
Amal Hospital 5607155
Al Arsal Cancer Centre 5353000

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital 09983323
Zarqa National Hospital 09900560
Ibn Sina Hospital 09986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital 09990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital 02727555
Roman Catholic Hospital 02727275
Ibn Al Nafoes Hospital 027103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital 027102831, 027102011

Speciality Hospital 0217103100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital 0312014111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport, Tel. 44-53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (537001). Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:00 Sanaa (RJ)
08:25 Bombay (RJ)
08:50 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:30 New Delhi (RJ)
10:05 Beirut (RJ)
10:15 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:45 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
15:00 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:25 London (RJ)
18:05 Athens (RJ)
18:05 Kuwait (RJ)
19:00 Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)
23:05 Larnaca (RJ)
00:15 Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)

14:45 Doha (QR)
15:55 Dubai (EK)
17:25 Muscat, Dubai (GF)
18:40 Beirut (ME)
19:05 Paris (AF)
20:25 Tel Aviv (LY)
20:40 Cairo (MS)
23:10 Istanbul (TK)
00:25 Moscow (SU)
01:15 Amsterdam (KL)
04:10 London (BA)

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18:05 Kuwait (RJ)
19:00 Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)
23:05 Larnaca (RJ)
00:15 Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)

11:30 Shannon, Chicago (RJ)
11:25 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
12:05 Kuwait (RJ)
12:10 Paris (RJ)
12:15 Athens (RJ)
12:15 London (RJ)
12:30 Amsterdam (RJ)
19:45 Larnaca (QR)
20:10 Cairo (RJ)
20:30 Jeddah (QR)
00:10 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)

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Home
King
It w
U.N. to
social,
Council of
Terrorism,
AMMAN (Petra) —
Head of the Coun-
Arab Interior Min-
Ahmad Saleh Wed-
arrived here to d-
with senior Minist-
Interior officials pr-
session, which wi-
held under the
Patronage on Januar-
In an arrival statu-
Saleh expressed his
ness for the recov-
His Majesty King H-
and his safe return f-
We are delight-
share with our Jor-
brothers their joy an

King Hussein: Coming home is coming home to one's family

'It was a moving moment that I have been waiting for for a long, long time'

Following are excerpts from a CNN transcript of the Jan. 20 interview with His Majesty King Hussein conducted by CNN Chief International Correspondent Christiane Amanpour in Amman.

AMANPOUR: Your Majesty, thank you for joining us on this day. Yesterday, we were here, we saw you pilot your own plane into Amman. You were escorted by a dramatic 12-jet airborne escort. It looked amazing. How did you feel when you stepped out of that plane yesterday and saw your family, and everybody there ready to welcome you?

KING HUSSEIN: It was a moving moment that I have been waiting for for a long, long time and one that I was wondering whether it would come. But with a lot of faith and determination and faith in God, of course, and with all the family support I received, particularly from my wife and children and everyone at the medical institute, I had to do my best. And so we got through it, another ordeal, and a very, very difficult one at that. I learnt a lot, but coming home is — coming home to one's family and one's people and the country one has lived through ever since one was born and tried to serve to the best of my ability, certainly, during — well over 40 years now.

AMANPOUR: Your Majesty, you said that you wondered at some point whether you would make it home, whether you would get back. Was there a moment where you feared that you would come back?

KING HUSSEIN: No, I don't think that I had any questions, really, in that regard except that when, I mean, I realised that I'm getting on in years and that the problems that seem to appear from time to time are more numerous than they would be, but we approach that with a lot of honesty and a lot of clarity and transparency. And I have a feeling that, maybe others don't agree with me, that one should tell everybody exactly where one is on the physical side and every other respect.

AMANPOUR: Well, you certainly broke with tradition. In this region, there are many elderly leaders here, some of whom are sick and none of whom have really told their people what is wrong with them, if anything. But can we get back to what your plans are now. You've come home, all the Jordanians are wondering what's on your mind. There's been a lot of speculation. You've talked about a comprehensive review. What, they wonder, does that mean?

KING HUSSEIN: Well, let me put it in the following way. First of all, I have always been a

'...My concern is not for me... It has been for Jordan, its stability, its progress, its democracy, its people'

fatalist, and I have always felt that there is a beginning to life and an end to life. And I feel it more than any time in the past.

Therefore my concern is not for me. It has never been for me anyway. It has been for Jordan, its stability, its progress, its democracy, its people — raising their heads, sharing and building up the future that is their right, not a broken people as we see in so many parts of the world. So, when you spend six months away, you watch, apart from the fact that I always watch, how things move, what tendencies there are, what trends, what weaknesses there may be.

And I think I've come back with a lot of thoughts and ideas. There've been many speculations but I think they're all speculations until they become fact.

AMANPOUR: There's been a great deal of

speculation about your successor. Is there any reason for that? Are you going to change the current plan where Crown Prince Hassan, your brother, is designated as your successor?

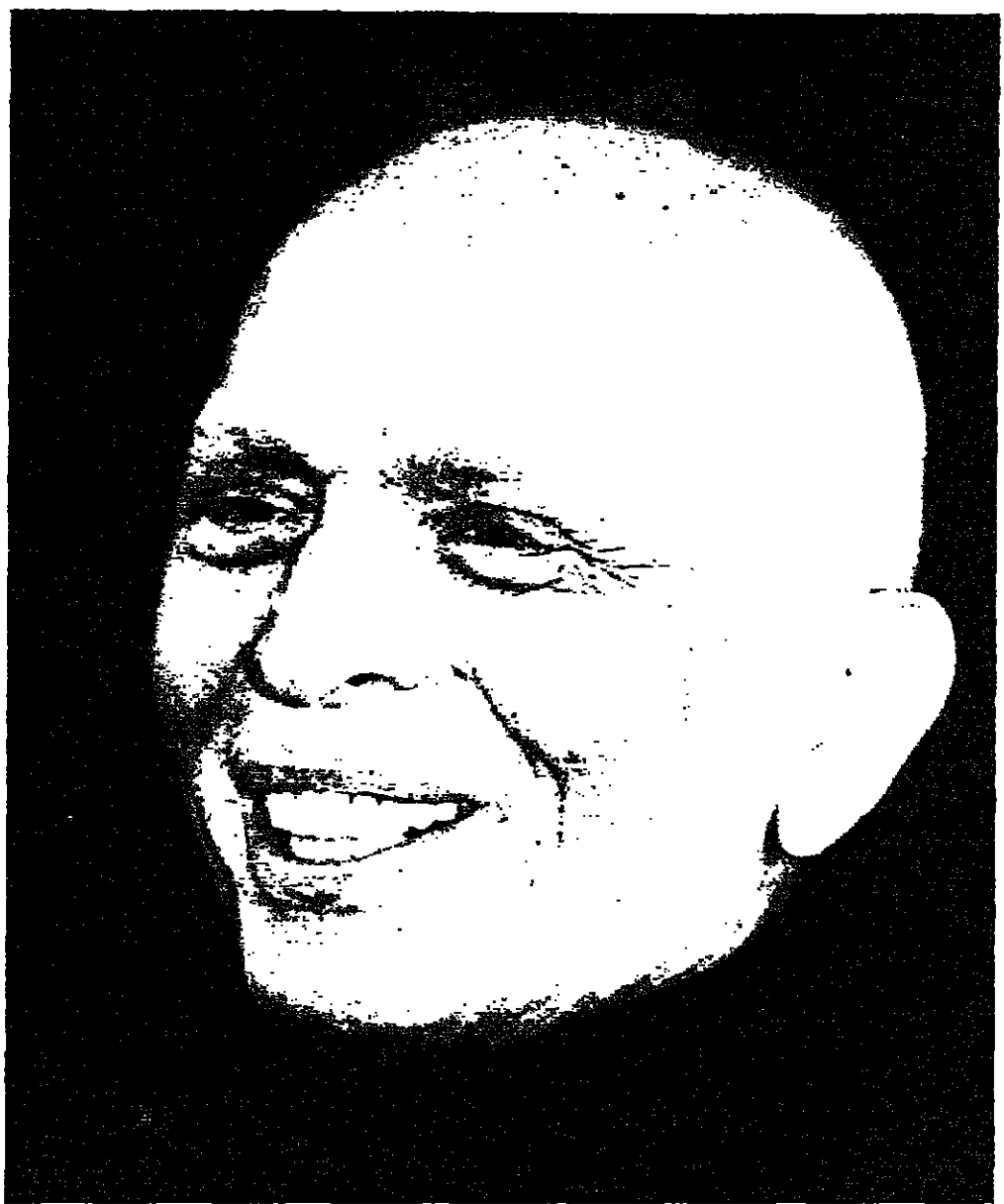
KING HUSSEIN: Prince Hassan has done an awful lot of good during the years that he has spent by my side. Personally I choose to again demonstrate that it is not a question of personal objective or of greed or anything else. I felt it is an important time that there was no substitute but to find a member of the family close by to take over. My brother, Mohammed, concurred at the time. And it was I who did bring about and canvass for the alternative in our Constitution that enables a brother to take over at times. But that didn't mean at all that it was the end, and I think a Crown Prince has to work in the background to a very large extent. I gave him maybe more than he would normally have because he has to be the reserve, — but when he gets too involved sometimes he gets the same kind of criticism that I do or maybe worse or otherwise.

So there are all these factors that we have to think about now and not in terms of Prince Hassan, this is not the sole focus of my attention at this stage, but what can we do to give Jordanians the assurance that the future is secure, that it's built on love and cooperation and understanding and not intimidation, and that it is a country that is going to continue to leave an impression on this part of the world.

AMANPOUR: So, sir, is that a yes or a no? Are you going to change the line of succession?

KING HUSSEIN: I'm not prepared to say anything, so please don't commit me to anything whatsoever because I really haven't come up with anything — I have only thoughts and ideas, and I've always had to take the final decisions and, although this has been contested at times, it's my responsibility and I will come to it in an appropriate time.

The full interview is scheduled to be aired on CNN's programme "Newsstand" on Sunday.



His Majesty King Hussein (AFP photo)

U.N. to study landmines' social, economic threats

AMMAN (J.T.) — An appraisal of the humanitarian and socio-economic threats posed by some 250,000 landmines along the Jordanian-Israeli border will be conducted by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in cooperation with the Government of Jordan at the end of the week.

An assessment team from UNMAS, headed by Colonel Wolfgang Hirsch, will arrive on Friday, 22 January, for a week-long mission at the request of Jordan's permanent mission to the United Nations in New York.

The five-member UN team will conduct site visits and meet with His Royal Highness Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid, director of the Hashemite Charity Society for Soldiers with Special Needs which extends assistance to landmine survivors. UNMAS experts will also meet with members of the Armed Forces, senior government officials, Amman-based U.N. officials as well as key representatives of the diplomatic corps who are supporting initiatives to remove landmines and assist victims.

Landmines have long constituted a serious humanitarian problem for Jordan, especially along the Jordan Valley and northern frontier, where the country's most valuable farmland rests. Military

sources estimate that over 300,000 landmines have been planted in Jordan since 1948, causing approximately 400 civilian injuries and 88 deaths to date. Today, ten per cent of the population

'More than half of the world's 100 million landmines are buried in the Middle East'

continue to live in areas littered with the explosive devices.

Although Jordan has already cleared 65,000 landmines along its western borders since the signing of the peace treaty with Israel in 1994, an estimated 250,000 mines continue to pose a threat to residents and hinder economic development. The UNMAS mission will define the scope of the landmine problem in contaminated areas of the country, identify opportunities for mine action initiatives and prepare recommendations for the implementation of demining programmes. The

UNMAS plan will also address the needs of disabled landmine victims, the resettlement of inhabitants in mine-infested areas and delivery of humanitarian aid.

Last July, Jordan became the fifth Arab country to sign the 1997 Ottawa Convention, also known as the Mine Ban Treaty, which prohibits the use, production and stockpiling of anti-personnel landmines.

The signing took place in conjunction with the first landmine conference in the region, hosted in Jordan by the Landmine Survivors Network — a movement which enjoys the support of Her Majesty Queen Noor for a worldwide ban on landmines.

More than half of the world's 100 million landmines are buried in the Middle East with the highest concentration in Egypt. The UNMAS mission to Jordan underscores a resolution adopted by the U.N. General Assembly which emphasises the world body's role in promoting mine clearance, raising awareness on the issue and providing assistance to landmine survivors.

Council of Interior Ministers to meet in Amman

Terrorism, narcotics trafficking on the agenda

AMMAN (Petra) — The Head of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers Ahmad Saleh Wednesday arrived here to discuss with senior Ministry of Interior officials preparations for the council's 16th session, which will be held under the Royal Patronage on January 29.

In an arrival statement, Saleh expressed his happiness for the recovery of His Majesty King Hussein and his safe return home. "We are delighted to share with our Jordanian brothers their joy and hap-

piness for the return of King Hussein, who has made and is making every effort possible to support Arab solidarity in all fields," he told the Jordan News Agency (Petra).

Praising King Hussein's pan-Arab positions, Saleh said: "Contemporary history will record the King's positive contributions to serving Arab causes and defending the rights and achievements of the Arab peoples."

Speaking about the agenda of the three-day meetings, which will be

held in Amman for the first time, Saleh said the conference will discuss such issues as fighting terrorism, control of narcotic trafficking, an Arab strategy to addressing the illegal use of narcotics and their negative effects on the mind. He said that draft model security agreement, which the Arab countries can use to conclude inter-Arab agreements, and a model draft law on extraditing criminals and fugitives from law will also be discussed.

Human rights society appeals to international federation to rally against economic sanctions, further strikes on Iraq

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordan Society for Human Rights (JSHR) has appealed to the Paris-based International Federation of Human Rights to help end "the dangerous violations of human rights" inherent in the continued sanctions on the Iraqi people which has to date caused the death of more than half a million people.

In a message sent to Patrick Baudouin, the federation's president, the JSHR said the appeal "draws attention to the dangerous violations directed at the Iraqi citizens' human rights resulting from the embargo and the unjustified military acts of aggression and the collective punishment imposed on them for more than eight years."

The message, sent by the JSHR President Suleiman Sweiss, noted that "the basic right, that of the right to life, is

being violated daily in Iraq where more than half a million women, children and old people have died in the past years due to the shortage of food, medicine and medical equipment. Last November it was announced in Baghdad that 9,000 Iraqis mostly children and elderly people died as a direct result of the embargo," the appeal pointed out.

"These horrible violations have aroused among the Jordanian people in general and the JSHR in particular feelings of anger, sorrow and condemnation, and private Jordanian organisations from all sectors have been launching a campaign to collect donations to help the Iraqi people through their ordeal," according to the statement.

"It is most regrettable to see this ordeal continuing for years before the

eyes of the whole world while the humanitarian conscience and the will of free nations are unable to stop these ugly crimes against the Iraqi nation which has made substantial contributions to human civilisation," the appeal continued.

Urging the federation to take prompt action to deal with the situation, the appeal said: "We are not writing to you to shed tears or to express pain which we feel every day over the Iraqi people's tragedy, but rather we are demanding you to act, through every available channel, to halt this crime being committed against humanity and the Iraqi people's human rights. We demand that you take prompt and specific action towards organising an international campaign to lobby for the lifting of the unjust sanctions and the

embargo imposed on the Iraqi people and to prevent further military attacks against Iraq like those that occurred in the past month."

"Our demand stems from our deep commitment to safeguard all human rights which are rightful for all nations, and from our feeling of the common humanitarian pain," said the appeal.

It added, "we are quite confident that through your endeavour to protect human rights around the world you will respond favourably to our appeal, because we are confident that the pain and suffering of 20 million Iraqis are affecting your feelings too and prompting you to seek action that would save the Iraqi people and safeguard their basic right to life."

News In Brief

King Hussein receives cables

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Wednesday received congratulatory cable from Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Abdul Hadi Majali. Majali wished King Hussein continued good health and a happy life, saying that Jordanians' rejoicing of the King's return is a clear sign of their love of their leader. The King received another cable from head of the Public Security Department General Nsouh Muhieddin congratulating on his full recovery and safe return home. He also expressed his pride, as well as that of PSD personnel, in the King's leadership. Jordanians thronged the streets to welcome the King following his arrival in Amman after undergoing six months of cancer chemotherapy in the U.S.

Public holiday announced

AMMAN (Petra) — On the occasion of His Majesty King Hussein's safe return home, all ministries, government departments and public institutions will observe a holiday today (Thursday), according to a communique issued by Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh. To mark the occasion, the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) Governor Ziad Fariz also issued a communique announcing today as an official holiday for banks and financial institutions. Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) in Jordan Gunar Loffberg decided to close all UNRWA institutions in Jordan today to mark the occasion. Government departments, public institutions and banks have been observing an official holiday since last Sunday, January 17, in observance of 'Eid Al Fitr, which fell on Monday, January 18.

Weather to remain cold

AMMAN (J.T.) — The weather will remain relatively cold today despite a slight rise in temperatures, a Meteorology Department source said Wednesday. The source said the low pressure affecting the Kingdom for the past four days began receding Wednesday afternoon. The department expects a gradual rise in temperature over the next three days, with temperatures reaching 12 degrees Celsius today, dropping to five at night. The low pressure has caused heavy rainfall in the north of the Kingdom, with Ras Munif in Ajloun area registering the highest rainfall: 63 millimetres over the last four days, followed by Deir Alla with 42 millimetres and Irbid with 40 millimetres. In Aqaba the weather will be partly cloudy with a possibility for scattered showers. Expected temperatures today are 21 degrees Celsius, dropping to 11 at night.

Refinery reports cylinder surplus

AMMAN (Petra) — General Manager of the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company Abdul Wahab Zu'bi on Wednesday called on gas distributors to obtain their gas cylinders from the company saying that there is a surplus of cylinders. He added that storage capacity stands now at 14,000 tonnes of gas for the time being.

Police investigate death of 22-year-old man

AMMAN (J.T.) — Police are investigating the death of a 22-year-old man found dead in a deserted area of Qweismeh Wednesday morning, according to official sources.

Bandar M.'s body was found by his family at 7:00 a.m. on Wednesday several metres away from his relatives' house, the source said.

The victim's family informed authorities that their son had left the house to celebrate His Majesty King Hussein's safe return to the Kingdom on Tuesday.

"But their son failed to return home, and his family thought that he spent the night at his relatives' house where the body was found," the source said.

An autopsy performed by a team of pathologists at the National Institute of Forensic Medicine showed no indication of violence.

"We found no traces of violence, injuries or strangulation on the victim's body," Pathologist, Hani Juhshan said.

He added that blood and tissue samples were sent to the Criminal Lab to determine if the man was murdered or if he died of natural causes.

"There is a big possibility that the youth might have frozen to death," one source told the Jordan Times.

Police confirmed the incident and said they were investigating the case.

What's Going On

PLAY

• "Al Zaroub" at the Royal Cultural Centre on Saturday Jan. 23 at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

• Exhibition of ceramics, sculpture, and abstract (plastic) art by Jordanian, Iraqi, Syrian, Lebanese, and Sudanese artists at Hammourabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5536098), until Jan. 25.

• "The Warm Winter" — works by several artists at Orfali Art Gallery, Um Uthaina (Tel. 5526932), until Feb. 1.

• The Tenth Anniversary Exhibition of Contemporary Arab Artists at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh (Tel. 4643251/2), until Jan. 28.

Police pull guns back from Kosovo massacre site

NEAR RAKAK, Serbia (R) — Serb police had withdrawn their weapons Wednesday from positions around the site of an alleged massacre in Kosovo, although troops could still be seen moving around in woods above the village.

An anti-aircraft gun which had been placed Monday on a hill above Rakak, about 26 km south of the Kosovo capital Pristina, had disappeared.

"We haven't heard anything as of this morning," said one of a group of international monitors standing on the hill.

"It was quiet last night. Quiet so far this morning," said Sandy Blyth, spokesman for international monitors in Kosovo.

Signs warning of mines had been placed beside a track leading to the hill. Troops on foot were in nearby woods.

The monitors' future in the province has been thrown into doubt by an

order from Belgrade to expel the head of their mission. William Walker, for accusing Serb security forces of massacring 45 ethnic Albanian villagers in Rakak last Friday.

The Yugoslav government initially ordered Walker to leave the country by Wednesday afternoon, but Tuesday unexpectedly gave him an extra 24 hours. He is currently in Belgrade.

Tuesday NATO generals flew to Belgrade to try to persuade President Slobodan Milosevic to stop his latest offensive, which the monitors said Monday had widened to three other villages around Rakak.

Diplomats said the talks had made no headway. Western officials found it hard to explain the apparent reprieve for Walker.

"I simply don't know, except that it keeps the eye on Walker rather than autopsies and stuff like that," one said.

A Yugoslav forensic team

began work Tuesday on the bodies of the dead, retrieved from Rakak after security forces had pounded what they believed were ethnic Albanian rebel positions around the village for two days.

The head of the forensic team told Reuters there were no signs any of the victims had been executed.

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), whose monitors were allowed to witness the autopsies, said examinations had so far been performed on three out of 40 bodies. It had no comment on the Yugoslav official's assessment.

The Serb-run Media Centre in Kosovo said a policeman reported killed Tuesday was the deputy chief of police for the town of Urosevac, near the scene of the fighting, adding that he had been killed trying to protect investigators probing the alleged massacre. There was no independent confirmation.



Supreme Allied Commander Europe, U.S. General Wesley Clark, centre, arrives at NATO headquarters in Brussels, to attend a meeting with NATO ambassadors to discuss the situation in Kosovo. Man at right is unidentified (AP photo)

NATO generals deliver Milosevic a message

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia (AP) — President Slobodan Milosevic is defending his right to crush Kosovo's ethnic Albanian rebels, despite a NATO warning to halt the violence delivered personally by the alliance's top generals.

During a meeting Tuesday with Gen. Wesley Clark and Klaus Naumann, Milosevic showed no sign of backing down on his refusal to allow a U.N. war crimes court to investigate last week's massacre of 45 ethnic Albanians in Rakak.

As a result, chief war crimes prosecutor Louise Arbour is abandoning her effort to enter Kosovo to investigate the massacre. Her spokesman, Mark McEvoy, said Arbour would return Wednesday to The Hague from neighbouring Macedonia after being refused entry twice this week.

During the meeting with Clark, the American who serves as supreme allied commander in Europe, and Naumann, the German who chairs the NATO Military Committee, Milosevic said he would cooperate with the international mission verifying the Oct. 12 cease-fire agreement, but not its American head, William Walker.

Walker has been ordered to leave the country after blaming Serb forces for the Rakak massacre.

The two generals flew to Belgrade to warn Milosevic that the alliance would not tolerate further breaches of the ceasefire, which narrowly averted NATO airstrikes in October.

The generals left Belgrade for NATO headquarters in Brussels, Belgium late Tuesday without issuing any statement. They were briefing NATO ambassadors Wednesday.

A Western source close to the talks, speaking on condition of

anonymity, described them as "not completely successful but we made progress in certain areas." He refused to elaborate.

Alexander Vershbow, the American ambassador to NATO, said the alliance is "on the brink" of action.

Asked in an interview with the British Broadcasting Corp. if Milosevic still has a few days to manoeuvre, the ambassador said: "I wouldn't guarantee that he has even that long."

In Washington, State Department spokesman James P. Rubin said that, based on initial reports of the meeting, "We are not encouraged." Rubin once again described the expulsion of Walker as unacceptable, hinting that the verification mission faces an uncertain future.

"It's hard to see how an independent verification mission can operate when the chief of mission is expelled for reporting the truth," he said.

Late Tuesday, the U.N. Security Council unanimously adopted a statement that doesn't blame either side for the Rakak massacre, but calls for a full investigation. The statement also urges the Yugoslav government to allow Walker to remain and to work with the U.N. war crimes tribunal.

In a statement distributed by the Yugoslavia's Tanjug news agency, Milosevic said his government remains committed to a political solution. But he said the government has a "legitimate right to fight against terrorism." Milosevic said international pressure on a sovereign country fighting terrorism "cannot be justified." Milosevic said ethnic Albanian rebels had launched more than 500 "terrorist attacks" since the October truce.

He also defended actions by Serb security forces, such as the attacks on Rakak, saying they

"cannot be qualified as an attack on civilians." Serb police have moved the bodies of the Rakak victims to a morgue in the provincial capital Pristina. The chief Serb investigator, Danica Marinkovic, said preliminary examination showed no evidence of a massacre.

Tanjug identified one of the women killed in Rakak as a "daughter of the leader of (ethnic Albanian) terrorists" in the village. Tanjug said the woman, who was not identified, was "actively involved" in the rebel movement.

Serb officials said Wednesday three bodies had already been examined. A spokeswoman for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva, Judith Kumin, expressed "shock and horror" at the massacre and said two infants in a group of refugees who fled Monday subsequently died of the cold.

Meanwhile, Serb forces bombarded rebel positions in the hills surrounding Rakak on Tuesday. An Associated Press photographer said one Serb policeman was killed and two were wounded.

Despite the apparent impasse, diplomatic efforts are continuing to resolve the crisis. Russia's deputy foreign minister, Alexander Avdeyev, arrived in Belgrade Tuesday night and sources said he was meeting Milosevic Wednesday morning. The sources spoke on condition of anonymity.

The chairman of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Norwegian Foreign Minister Knut Vollebaek, was expected soon in Belgrade, possibly Wednesday.

Since the crackdown began last year, an estimated 2,000 people have been killed and nearly 200,000 people are displaced across the province.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Doctors rule out immediate surgery for Yeltsin

MOSCOW (AFP) — Doctors have ruled out immediate surgery to treat President Boris Yeltsin's ulcer, medical sources cited by the Interfax news agency said Wednesday. Kremlin doctors opted to continue to prescribe drugs to treat Yeltsin's large ulcer, following an internal probe of the president's stomach conducted at the Central Clinical Hospital earlier, the news agency reported. Chief presidential spokesman Dmitry Yakushkin said the ulcer had stopped bleeding and doctors had detected the first signs that the open sore was responding to treatment and beginning to heal. Doctors had allowed Yeltsin to leave his hospital bed and walk around his suite of rooms, as well as study documents at his desk.

Pope urges end to Kosovo, Sierra Leone violence

VATICAN CITY (R) — Pope John Paul Wednesday made an impassioned appeal for an end to violence in Kosovo and Sierra Leone that he said had been characterised by "ferocity and ruthlessness." "We ask God with renewed faith that, where hate abounds, he may bring his fatherly mercy, reawakening the consciences of those who shape their people's destiny and moving the souls of everyone to thoughts of peace," the Pontiff said at his regular weekly audience. NATO has warned Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic it is poised to launch air strikes to force an end to his iron-fisted policy in the rebellious southern Serb province of Kosovo, where 90 per cent of the population are ethnic Albanians. International monitors reported that 45 civilians were killed in one Kosovo village at the weekend, and blamed security forces. Milosevic issued a statement saying the deaths had occurred in the security forces' fight against terrorist gangs. The Pope made special mention of the Archbishop of Freetown, Joseph Henry Ganda, who has been kidnapped by rebels in the Sierra Leone capital, and other missionaries who are also being held. "I appeal to those responsible to release them... as soon as possible," the Polish-born Pontiff said.

France sees compromise with Germany over nuclear reprocessing

PARIS (AP) — France's industry secretary said Wednesday he was confident a compromise would be reached with Germany to ease the impact of its decision to stop sending spent nuclear fuel out of the country for reprocessing. German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and his junior coalition partner, the environmentalist Greens, have agreed to end the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel abroad as of Jan. 1, 2000. The move is part of a plan to weaken Germany's nuclear power. The government hopes to introduce the new draft law on nuclear power in parliament this month. But French and British officials are insisting that Germany honour lucrative reprocessing contracts France's state-owned nuclear reprocessor COGEMA says Germany's withdrawal from contracts running until 2010 would cost the company more than 30 billion francs (4.2 billion euros/\$5.3 billion). In an interview with radio station RTL, French Industry Secretary Christian Pignatelli said conditions were in place to allow a Franco-German commission studying the issue to "find a compromise." "There are contracts between COGEMA and private German electricians. And there are texts that have the value of a treaty" between France and Germany dating back to 1989 and 1990, Pignatelli said. Schroeder said Monday he expects no compensation claims from France or Britain. "I have read the contracts, and I see no cause for damage claims from companies or governments," he said.

India to flaunt Agni missile at national day march

NEW DELHI (R) — India will unveil its entire range of missiles including the controversial ballistic missile Agni at its annual republic day parade next week, local media said Wednesday. "For the first time, Agni, the short-range Trishul, medium-range Akash and anti-tank missile Nag which are now undergoing various stages of technical trials would be displayed in the parade," the Press Trust of India news agency quoted parade commander S.K. Awasthy as saying. India's Bharatiya Janata Party government was carried out underground nuclear explosions last year, said it is committed to developing the 2,500 km range, which Western experts say is nuclear-capable. The intermediate-range Agni was last test flown in February. Since then, successive Indian governments have been accused of mothballing the project under Western pressure. India uses the parade, held each year on Jan. 26, anniversary of the country becoming a republic, to show its defence capabilities and cultural diversity. "It will be a parade of the millennium. Like last year, it will be hours long with wide participation projecting India's prowess as well as its rich and diverse cultural heritage," Awasthy was quoted as saying.

UNHCR expects to send all Cambodians back from Thailand

BANGKOK (AP) — A group of 405 Cambodian refugees left their camp in Thailand's Sisaket Province for the Wednesday morning, bringing the number of returning almost 12,000 in the past 15 months, the office of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees said. A spokesman for the UNHCR in Bangkok said it expects to send all Cambodian refugees in Thailand back home in a few months if there is no sudden obstacle. The 25,000 Cambodians remain in three Thai camps: Cheung in Surin province, Phu Noi in Sisaket province, and Chong Khao Plu in Trad province. Virtually all fled July 1997 coup d'etat sparked factional fighting in the areas. "We will close down the camps when last group of refugees depart for home," said the UNHCR spokesman on condition of anonymity. Wednesday, returnees crossed from Thailand's Aranyaprathet border crossing to Poipet. The refugees from 94 camps have applied to resettle in eight different provinces. UNHCR spokesman in Geneva, Judith Kumin, said Tuesday that more than 1,000 refugees have been returned from Phu Noi camp since the beginning of the year. They had chosen not to return to the nearby area, former Khmer Rouge guerrilla base of Anlong Veng, rather to several eastern provinces, including Monduliri. A UNHCR team visited Monduliri last week following their assessment, a first group of returnees left the transit centre in the northeastern Sisophon Saturday for Monduliri, where they were posed to arrive Wednesday.

E. African presidents to consider regional community

ARUSHA, Tanzania (AFP) — The heads of state of Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda are to meet Friday to study advanced plans for an East African Community integrating their 80 million people.

Presidents Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania, Daniel Arap Moi of Kenya and Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, meeting in the northern Tanzanian town of Arusha, will consider progress on a draft treaty which officials say could be signed as early as July.

A significant degree of integration is already in place. The shillings of the three countries are interchangeable while a common flag is already in use, if rarely seen. A common passport, valid within the three countries, is set to be launched. The community would take over from East African Cooperation, established in November 1994 to harmonise tariffs and business practices and ease the flow of citizens across the borders.

The new entity would eventually be open to such nearby countries as Rwanda and Burundi.

Kenya and Tanzania each have populations of some 30 million people, and Uganda about 20 million. Rwanda and Burundi each have populations of around six million.

Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda converted British colonial cooperation, established in 1947, into a community after they gained independence in the early 1960s, setting up common

air, rail and maritime services, and regional universities.

That community founded in 1977 under the pressures of the socialist policies of then Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere and the bellicose regional foreign policy of then Ugandan dictator Idi Amin.

Prospects are encouraging now, observers say, because all three countries are following the same International Monetary Fund and World Bank guidelines, privatising parastatal companies and generally opening up their economies, although progress is uneven and corruption a common problem.

Uganda is landlocked, but its imports come through both Dar es Salaam, Tanzania's main port, and Kenya's Mombasa port, also on the Indian Ocean, making the idea of a community attractive to both local and foreign exporters and importers.

The harmonisation of tariffs and other taxes and business practices is still at an early stage, though, and with drought facing the region, Kenya, with its dominant regional economy, has banned the export of maize to Tanzania, where it would fetch higher prices than at home.

All three countries boast elected presidents and legislatures, and the regional foreign policies of Tanzania and Kenya are basically neutral.

Uganda, the only country facing internal rebellions, is also fighting in the

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Its troops are fighting alongside rebels there trying to overthrow President Laurent Kabila, but the Ugandan troops are ostensibly aiming to wipe out the rear-bases its own rebels maintain in the east of the DRC.

Uganda is also confronting Sudan, its neighbour, with Kampala and Khartoum accusing each other of supporting each other's rebels.

But regional military cooperation is part of the east African agenda, and Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda have already set up a common defence affairs unit in Arusha to coordinate training, common security, and disaster handling.

Ministers holding preparatory meetings are looking at the eventual inclusion of Rwanda and Burundi in the community, but Rwandan Foreign Minister Anastase Gasana told AFP Tuesday that the east African presidents were not planning to make any decision on this at this stage.

"Our adhesion is not on the agenda," he said, adding that the summit would look at inclusion "once internal problems are settled."

Those include civil wars in both Rwanda and Burundi, involvement by their government troops and rebels in the DRC — though Bujumbura denies its troops are there — and fragile economies dependent on exports of tea and coffee, but even more on foreign aid.

S. Africa police arrest most-wanted fugitive

PRETORIA, South Africa (AP) — Police have arrested South Africa's most-wanted fugitive, a former African National Congress militant whose escape was a major embarrassment for authorities, officials said Wednesday.

Colin Chauke was captured Tuesday night in Nelspruit, 320 kilometres east of Pretoria, the capital police said.

During a brief court appearance, he was ordered detained until a June 1 hearing. Authorities said he would be held in a maximum security jail.

"We will not take any chances," said prison

spokesman Rudi Potgieter. Chauke, 30, was arrested in Pretoria in October 1997 in connection with a \$2.6 million rand (\$210,000) robbery of a cash depot. He is a suspected in several similar robberies.

He escaped from a Pretoria jail two months later after holding a prison guard hostage with a handgun. Police made his recapture a top priority, and had set a Dec. 25, 1998, deadline.

Chauke had been a member of Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), the armed wing of the ANC before it won

power in the country's first all-race election in 1994.

The ANC's right-wing, mainly white political opponents sought to link Chauke with the party. The Freedom Front said it hoped Chauke would provide information on alleged involvement in crime by ANC members.

"If indications are confirmed that (Spear of the Nation) members are continuing to make the country ungovernable through crime, the ANC would have to accept full responsibility," Freedom Front spokesman Kallie Kriel said.

'Washington will not return Stasi files to Bonn'

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The United States will not return to Bonn the complete files from former East Germany's Stasi spy agency, but will continue to allow Germany access to them, The Washington Post reported Wednesday.

The report, quoting informed government sources, contradicted German press reports over the weekend that an agreement had been reached to return the files in exchange for magnetic tapes of the Stasi which German authorities recently decoded.

One U.S. official suggested

German officials "appear to be putting out stories in the press to have greater access to the original files."

German authorities have several times asked for these files, which the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has held since the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 and the collapse of the East German regime.

The files are considered important because they contain the names of several thousand Stasi agents as well as secret reports on their activities, and could lead to the identification of former spies.

The German government

"has had access to the files in the past," an unidentified senior U.S. official told the Post. "But we have no plans to give them away."

"We will continue to be helpful" with Germans and other allied countries who wish to review the files, the official added.

It remains a mystery how the CIA obtained the Stasi files, and one official even declined to say what year they were obtained.

"That might help someone figure out where they came from," he told the Post.

Chinese sentenced in first Internet dissent case

SHANGHAI, China (AP) — A Chinese software entrepreneur was convicted Wednesday of subversion and sentenced to two years in prison for giving e-mail addresses to dissidents abroad.

Lin Hai, 30, is the first person convicted in China's effort to crush dissent in cyberspace even as it promotes the Internet for economic and educational use.

Lin was convicted of "inciting the subversion of state power," said a spokesman for the Shanghai Higher Level People's Court, who gave his name as Mr. Zhou. The crime is among China's most serious and is normally used against political dissidents.

In issuing the sentence, the three-judge panel with the Shanghai Intermediate People's Court said Lin deserved to be "punished harshly," according to a copy of the verdict obtained by Hong Kong-based Information Centre of Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China.

The court also fined him 10,000 yuan (\$1,200) and ordered "the tools of his crime" confiscated: two desktop computers, one laptop, a modem and telephone, the verdict said.

Lin's wife, Xu Hong, attended the sentencing but wasn't allowed to talk to her husband, and he did not speak either during the half-hour sentencing. She and other spectators were barred from his four-hour trial on Dec. 4.

"This is the first time I've seen him since he was arrested" last March, Xu said. She said she would not know whether her husband would appeal until his lawyer had a chance to

discuss the verdict with him.

"I will have to find out what Lin Hai thinks about the verdict," she said.

Lin, who owns a Shanghai software company, was arrested after he gave e-mail addresses of 30,000 Chinese computer users to "VIP Reference," a pro-democracy journal published on the Internet by Chinese dissidents in the United States.

China keeps close watch on the Internet. Special task forces have been set up to monitor the system. Service providers are required to register all users with the government and barriers have been installed to try to block sites deemed subversive or pornographic.

Nevertheless, the government has been unable to stop entirely the flow of pro-democracy materials sent into China by technically adept dissidents abroad.

Lin's case appears to be unrelated to a crackdown that began in November on pro-democracy activists trying to set up China's first opposition party. Three leaders of that group were sentenced last month to 11, 12 and 13 years in prison.

Robin Munro, a long-time observer of human rights in China, said Lin's short sentence could be meant to mute foreign criticism, while charging him with subversion — the worst offence in Chinese law — made it clear to Chinese that dissent on the Internet would not be tolerated.

"They achieved their domestic hard-line message, but they also can say to foreign critics, 'See how lenient we were,'" he said by telephone from Hong



Lin Hai, 30, a computer entrepreneur charged with subversion for supplying Chinese e-mail address to an Internet democracy magazine, is shown in this 1997 file photo (AP photo)

Kong. "Two years doesn't get Western congressmen and politicians in such a lather as 10 years would."

Lin had argued that he had no political motive and gave away the e-mail address in order to develop business contacts, his wife said.

Executives with China's rapidly growing Internet companies were reluctant to speak about a legal case. But an expert at an elite

government think-tank called the sentence appropriate.

"This was a matter of privacy," said Guo Liang of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing. He added that as a private businessman, Lin had no right to peddle e-mail address without permission from his owners.

"Perhaps his intentions were good, but he doesn't have the right to violate

my privacy," Guo said.

The publishers of "VIP Reference" issued a statement before Lin's sentencing calling the prosecution a "landmark case of Internet persecution" and said the government was trying to intimidate its critics.

During Lin's trial in December, he was allowed to have only two defence lawyers in the closed courtroom.

Seoul says N. Korea kidnap claim absurd

SEOUL (R) — North Korea said Wednesday a diplomat who went missing from his mission in Berlin was blackmailed and kidnapped by South Korean agents before being turned over to the United States.

Breaking the North's silence on the matter, the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), monitored in Tokyo, demanded the United States return the diplomat immediately.

South Korea branded that "an absurd slander" and a police spokesman in Berlin said there was no reason to suspect foul play.

The German Foreign Ministry said Monday a diplomat had gone missing from the North Korean diplomatic mission in Berlin last weekend but could not confirm reports that he had asked for asylum in the United States.

South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported that Kim Kyong-Pil, 54, a second secretary in the economic department, and his wife Kim Kum-Sun, 52, were seeking asylum in the United States.

U.S. State Department spokesman James Rubin told reporters in Washington Tuesday: "We don't comment on alleged asylum requests."

Berlin police spokesman Hans-Joerg Draeger said the North Korean mission in the

city had reported that the diplomat and his wife had gone missing.

"We opened an investigation into their disappearance. The result was that we could find no grounds for suspicion that a crime had been committed," Draeger told Reuters.

"The man is an adult and has the freedom to move around as he likes. This is not a matter for the police," he said.

Draeger could not confirm media reports that the couple were seeking asylum in the United States.

South Korean newspaper have quoted official sources as saying Kim defected after being reprimanded at a meeting in Pyongyang of officials involved in commercial activities.

The reports said Kim may have decided to seek asylum fearing he would be punished for not raising his quota of foreign currency.

Several North Korean diplomats have been arrested in various places around the world on drug smuggling charges over the past two years.

North Korean observers in Seoul say the North uses its diplomats for smuggling and counterfeiting operations to raise desperately needed hard currency.

The KCNA report, however, portrayed a plot in which files stolen from the diplomat's

computer were used to blackmail him into a meeting with South Korean agents, who kidnapped him from outside the Hilton Hotel in Berlin.

"Now that the U.S. still keeps our secretary abducted by (South Korean agents), we cannot but consider the U.S. to be an accomplice of the abduction," the KCNA said. "If (United States) also will be held responsible entirely for all the consequences."

It was the latest salvo from North Korea as talks take place in Geneva to seek a peace agreement to end a state of war on the Korean peninsula that has existed for nearly a half century. The 1950-53 Korea war was halted by a now traying truce.

KCNA said South Korea's Agency for National Security Planning (NSP) infiltrated an agent into the European Headquarters of North Korea's National Alliance for reunification in the early 1980s.

North Korea, which does not have formal relations with Germany, has a mission attached to the Chinese embassy.

KCNA said the NSP agent "systematically" stole computer files from Kim and tried "to allure and kidnap" him by using possession of the files as a threat.

Philippines sets date for first execution in years

MANILA (R) — A Philippine judge set the date Wednesday for the country's first execution in over two decades but ordered prison officials not to divulge it to the condemned man until just hours before his execution.

Trial judge Thelma Ponferrada fixed the date — the second he had set for convicted child rapist Leo Echegaray in recent weeks — a day after the supreme court all but dashed his hopes of avoiding death by revers-

ing its previous order to stay the execution.

The supreme court ruling clearing the way for the execution provoked a sharp reaction from the international community and the country's Roman Catholic Church, which insists that capital punishment is inhuman and does not deter crime.

"I am scandalised," influential Cardinal Jaime Sin told reporters. "The rest of the world is abolishing the death penalty and we, a Roman

Catholic country, are reintroducing it."

"This is a very sad step backwards for human rights in the Philippines, a country which has in many ways been at the forefront of human rights promotion in Asia," the London-based Amnesty International said in a statement faxed to Reuters.

Echegaray's lawyers said they were filing a new appeal with the court this week to seek another reprieve for the 38-year-old house painter

China mounts 'atheist propaganda' drive in Tibet

BEIJING (R) — China's Communist Party has launched a fresh "atheist propaganda" drive in Tibet in order to stamp out separatism and combat the devoutly Buddhist region's exiled spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, the Tibet Daily said.

"Strengthening atheist pro-

paganda is an important measure in deepening the anti-separatist struggle, in firmly resisting the reactionary infiltration of the Dalai Lama clique and in making farmers and herders shed the negative influence of religion," the state-run newspaper quoted a senior party official as saying.

The atheism campaign would include education on science, practical skills and hygiene and would be propagated by all official media in the Chinese-controlled Himalayan region, said the Tibet Daily in its Jan. 11 edition, seen in Beijing Wednesday.

Earlier this month an

India-based human rights group issued a report saying China had stepped up repression of religion in Tibet, posing a serious threat to the remote region's centuries-old Buddhist culture.

"The human rights situation in Tibet has continued to deteriorate over the last three years," said the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy said in its annual survey on human rights in the Chinese-ruled region, issued on Jan. 11.

"Repression of religion, an intrinsic element in Tibetan culture, was intensified during 1998 through the 'patriotic re-education programme,'" said the centre, which is based in Dharamsala, India, home of the exiled Dalai Lama.

China held 1,083 Tibetan political prisoners at the end of 1998, of which 246 were women and 12 were below the age of 18, said the report, based on interviews with recent refugees.

The report also highlighted harsh taxation, increased ethnic Chinese migration and discriminatory policies that it said were creating a hostile economic environment for native residents in Tibet, which China brought under Communist rule in 1951.

Many analysts predict China will impose tight controls on the independence-minded region this year as China gears for the 40th anniversary in March of the abortive Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule that resulted in the Dalai Lama's exile to India.



Top model Adriana Karembeu sports a metallic short dress under a white cape designed by Paco Rabanne for his 1999 spring/summer haute couture collection presented in Paris (AP photo)

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 Jordan Press Foundation,
 University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman

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Facsimile: Editorial: 5696183, Advertising: 5693337

E-mail: jtimes@go.com.jo

Web Site: http://www.access2arabia.com/jordantimes/

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times Advertising Department.

Endorse the French initiative

AT A time when France is working on a plan to ease the sanctions imposed on Iraq, and the Arab foreign ministers are about to convene a meeting in Cairo to discuss also how to lift the crippling sanctions, Dennis Halliday, the former coordinator of the U.N. oil-for-food programme in Iraq, described the effects of the embargoes slammed on Baghdad ever since the Gulf crisis as sheer genocide. "I don't like the word genocide, but can you find a better word to describe this sort of catastrophe," Halliday said following his address to the French National Assembly Tuesday on his findings on Iraq.

There is no better person to gauge the dire effects of the sanctions slammed on Iraq than the former U.N. official who worked so close to the Iraqi scene and has been privy to the plight and suffering of the Iraqis for several years. It so happens that the judgement of the former international official on the implications of the sanctions regime on Iraq's people, especially children, corresponds well with the conclusions of the several international specialised agencies such as UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP, ILO and WHO, not to mention practically all the U.N. human rights bodies. That is why we believe the Arab World should be a party to the process of phasing out the punitive sanctions that hurt most of all the Iraqi people.

When the U.N. itself attests to the fact that no less than 40,000 Iraqi adults and about 600,000 Iraqi children have lost their lives since 1990 due to the sanctions imposed on their country, who are we to challenge the extent of the "genocide" that the Iraqi people have been so savagely subjected to ever since the Gulf conflict. The least that the Arab foreign ministers can be expected to do is to endorse the French ideas and, if possible, improve on them. Surely the Arab countries are supposed to be in the forefront of the international community calling for an end to the suffering of the Iraqi people.

What the people of Iraq need is not only food and medicine but opportunities to develop their country economically and socially. It is now estimated that Baghdad would need no less than \$50-60 billion to finance its reconstruction. The Iraqi rights to development and economic progress must not be sacrificed for some dubious political aims. Now is the time to heed the counsel of the international experts and take them into serious consideration when the Iraqi file is put for a general review.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Dostour's Mazen Saket gave thanks to God for the safe return and full recovery of His Majesty King Hussein. Saket added that these were the true feelings of one of the country's citizens who chose a stand and belonged to an opposing political approach for 30 years. These feelings express what is special about Jordan's experience with all its positives and negatives, achievements and failures, solidarity and differences, openness and closedness as well as kindness and harshness, said the writer. At the end, it is a distinguished experience, which leads to a strong belief in how healthy the country's constitutional, parliamentary and democratic approaches are, he added. Jordan is currently facing one of its most critical and difficult stages, while the Arab Nation is living through one of the most dangerous periods since the beginning of this century. Jordanians of all classes are looking forward to reinforcing the country's unity in order to meet external and internal challenges and crises, which require re-activating the democratic march and removing the recent years' obstacles, said Saket, who added that citizens' gratitude, happiness and assurance are mixed with anticipation for the comprehensive changes, which were reported by the Arab and foreign media.

Al Arab Al Yawm's Nicola Nasser said normalisation with Arabs is a Jewish state goal, thus, all Israelis agree on it. However, Nasser added, in order to achieve normalisation, Palestinians have to begin, but their experience with the Israelis has been unsuccessful and cannot be considered a model for the Arabs. Shimon Peres' announcement that he and the Labour Party will support the establishment of a Palestinian state by separating the two nations, is an indirect admission that the idea of normalisation has failed. Peres did not elaborate on how the separation could be achieved, and since a 50-year-old normalisation experience of Arab Israelis in the Jewish state has left one-third of Arab-Israelis homeless, this is not an encouraging model for Palestinians living outside Israel, said the writer.

HM King Hussein: An epitome of inspiration

The view from
 Academia



Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein's safe return home Tuesday after an absence of six months during which he received medical treatment abroad has triggered much talk about the attributes that make him an asset to his people, the region, and the globe. Many lovers and admirers of the exceptional Monarch (whose number has increased dramatically over time) have said, and are saying, a great deal about him—and perceptively so. Over the years the King has come to mean so much to so many people (in the country, the region, and the world at large), not only because he has governed long, but also because he has, I would say, governed wisely. People have come to understand and appreciate his vision, his approach and his wisdom much more aptly now (now that enough time has elapsed) than at any other time before. Whether we like it or not, truths—even the most basic and visible—at times take time, ample time, to sink in.

On His Majesty's 61st birthday, I wrote in this column about what I saw as the three fundamental characteristics of the Monarch's approach, the three pillars of his wisdom: common-sense, moderation and consistency. On the happy, auspicious occasion of His Majesty's return a couple of days ago, I wish to add one more characteristic of the King which has not received the attention it deserves: his optimism.

We live in a part of the world where many—among us and around us—think negatively. They, maliciously or ignorantly, keep criticising and complaining the whole time, unable to see the many positive things that are present in our

lives, and the many positive things that have happened, are happening, and will be happening. They tell us that we are doing bad (nay, miserably) not only economically but also politically, socially and morally—when careful observation and examination of things prove the opposite. Negative thinking, complaining, cynicism, scepticism, doubt, pessimism, tragic vision and doom have become second nature to many among us. This is sad.

It is indeed amazing—how shall I say it?—how automatic, how quick, how almost instinctive many are in their expression of negativity. They are much like a radio or a cassette recorder: the minute you switch it on, it begins airing complaints, criticism, unfounded rumours, tragic stories, etc.

It is so refreshing, so encouraging and so vital in the context of such unhealthy environment to hear from optimists, who—as are not as prevalent in our midst as one would want. Optimism is needed not only for psychological health and sanity but also for success. How can you feel good, how can you perform well, and how can you succeed, if people keep thinking negatively, if they keep putting you down, if they give up before they try, and if they keep predicting and expecting doom and failure?

His Majesty is an optimist. Despite the many difficult circumstances the country and the region have been through for this past half century, he has kept his head high, and he has kept his smile. This is not a matter to be taken for granted. It takes an effort, a great effort for one to be cheerful and an optimist. It is easier (at

times, even convenient) to complain, criticise, and preach pessimism. Unlike pessimism, optimism is not second nature. To be an optimist you have to repress the negative signals within your own psyche. To be an optimist, you have to transcend the negative environment around you. To be an optimist, you have to work and produce results that justify your optimism. The King does all of this, and more.

King Hussein's optimism is, first, physiognomic and temperamental. It is well known to all that His Majesty, from his early boyhood until this very moment, has been an epitome of agility, liveliness, physical fitness and athleticism. This in itself is important. Kings are like teachers (teachers are like kings, I should say) in this respect. Students love and admire agile, lively, physically fit and athletic teachers; subjects love and admire kings who enjoy such characteristics. For almost half a century now the King has been an inspiration through his agility, liveliness, physical fitness and athleticism.

But much of the inspiration emanates, I would also say, from His Majesty's face. There is a great deal of magic in it: something that makes you feel safe, confident, secure and optimistic—and something that makes you feel good. Again, faces of leaders are like faces of teachers; depressing faces depress you; inspiring faces inspire you. The King's face inspires.

While in the more advanced parts of this tiny globe many understand the importance of one's air, outlook and appearance, many in our part of the world do not. Your colleagues at work who are frowning, who have unfriendly

faces, who do not know how to smile, and who lack the basics of civility and cheerfulness probably do not know how uninspiring, upsetting and depressing to others their very sight, their very presence, is.

We come from a culture which emphasises cheerfulness and optimism. The Prophet Mohammed declared on more than one occasion: "A smile to a fellow human being is an act of worship." The King's face epitomises the Prophet's saying.

But the king is an optimist also, secondly, in his attitude and approach. He himself, on more than one occasion, has criticised those who criticise negatively, those who put others down, those who preach the end of the world, those who speak of nothing but high water, volcanoes, earthquakes, doom and destruction (the millennialists, the apocalypsts, the extremists, the forces of darkness, and so

on). The King's optimism is not unfounded. It is based on the belief that development, progress, achievement and success take time. You have to plan first, you have to prioritise, and you have to proceed cautiously and meticulously. Such sound vision is reflected, internally, in the many five-year, ten-year development plans—which have done a lot of good for the country. Externally, it is reflected in his vision of peace in the region and in durable investments in relations with both Arab countries and countries of the globe. The King's vision in this respect counters and subverts the all-or-nothing attitude or approach which many pessimists among us preach, those who either want us to sit arm-tied until miracles materialise or those who want us to commit rash acts whose destructive results are all too well-known.

The King's optimism stems from his patient, long-term outlook. Even though he is at times willing to take risks when the opportunity is to be seized, he has the discipline, the maturity, responsibility and vision to wait until the moment is ripe. Short-term, fast-lane optimism—much like bad salespersons who want to get as much profit from you the first time you pay them a visit, even if they have to cheat you, not even thinking of investing in a future relationship with you, are short-sighted failures. A good leader must be patient, must think of long-term consequences.

A good leader, and His Majesty King Hussein (may he live long and prosper), is, must be inspiring, cheerful and optimistic. This is vital.

Israeli elections and Palestinians

Jerusalem Life



Daoud Kuttab

ELECTIONS WILL take place in Israel in the middle of next May. Eligible to vote in these elections is every Israeli citizen over the age of 18. One large group of people will not be allowed to participate in these elections. Palestinians living under the control of the state of Israel are not allowed this privilege.

For Palestinians the results of the Israeli elections affects them in two ways. The elected Israeli prime minister and parliament will have a direct effect on the lives of nearly 3 million Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank including East Jerusalem. Israel control the movements of Palestinians in these areas, the movement of goods and services in and out of these areas as well as controlling the skies above and the water below.

The Israeli elections also affect Palestinians in a different way. The party which will be elected will be charged with completing the interim as well as the permanent status talks with Palestinians. As important as this election is to their future, Palestinians are paralysed; not able to effect the results in any concrete way.

Not only are Palestinians not allowed to vote for the next Israeli prime minister, but the actions of even a tiny minority of Palestinians could adversely affect which direction these elections will go. In the last elections, multiple suicide bombings are said to have resulted in the defeat of dovish Labour Party leader Shimon Peres and the election of hard-liner Likud leader Netanyahu. Ironically, any new attacks will also help Netanyahu even though he is now the incumbent. In fact it is expected that any Palestinian-Israeli confrontation will help right wing candidates whose slogan call for a tougher policy towards Palestinians.

Even Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat feels trapped in these pivotal elections that in a way will deter-

mine his own political future and that of his life long dream of establishing a Palestinian state. Arafat's support to any peace party will be a kiss of death to that party.

So what should Palestinians do regarding an election that they are quite properly concerned about. While publicly stating that they don't want to interfere in internal Israeli politics there is no doubt that Palestinians want the peace camp to win. The experience of the past two years with the right wing Israeli government has produced nothing but disappointment after disappointment. Agreements are not honoured and the goodwill that prevailed during the Rabin/Peres era has evaporated.

But aside from the problems of violence, the issue of declaring a Palestinian state looms as the largest dilemma facing the Palestinian leadership. Ever since the Oslo agreement was signed, Yasser Arafat has been telling his people that Oslo is a transitional agreement that will lead to statehood. In the agreement a time ceiling was placed to guarantee that the interim phase will not turn into a permanent one. The Oslo signatories agreed that negotiations for the permanent status of the Palestinian areas begin after the third year of the interim agreement and end no later than the fifth year. After a short ceremonial opening in the last days of the Shimon Peres government, these talks have been held up by the lack of progress on key issues in the interim agreement.

Yasser Arafat is under two conflicting pressures. He is expected to fulfil his own pledge by declaring a state on May 4, 1999 irrespective of what it will do to the Israeli elections. Arafat would lose a lot of public support from his own Fateh movement as well as from the general Palestinian public if he doesn't carry out the promise he made to Palestinians. Proponents of this idea dismiss the fact that this will

effect the result of the Israeli elections by helping out the hard-liners in Israel. Among many Palestinians there is little difference between Labour and Likud. They cite the fact that Likud Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon and Likud Knesset leader Meir Shitreet have said publicly that they expect an eventual Palestinian state. For these Palestinians, in the Middle East fact are made on the ground and even negotiated agreements are only the results of movements by the Palestinian people on the ground.

On the other hand friendly Arab and foreign countries are pressuring the Palestinian leader to postpone his announcement for say six months. Egypt, Europe and the U.S. are said to be pushing for a delay in declaring statehood, otherwise they fear (although they would never state so publicly) Netanyahu will be reelected. No matter how the issue of statehood will be handled, Israeli voters will once again determine the leadership of their own government which has control directly or indirectly over the lives of another people. As Israelis elect their government for the 21st century let us hope that this apartheid-like situation will go away quickly making way for two freely elected states living side by side.

Pollard could still muddy the waters

By George S. Hishmeh

WASHINGTON — America's most notorious spy, Jonathan Jay Pollard, who passed on to Israel a roomful of classified data and photos of the Palestine Liberation Organisation headquarters in Tunis and Iraqi chemical factories, could still muddy the waters for the impeached U.S. president, Bill Clinton, and the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, now locked in a fierce fight for his political survival.

The Israeli leader took to task this week his Labour Party challenger, Ehud Barak, for refusing to sign a joint appeal to Clinton to free the convicted spy, who became an Israeli citizen while serving a life-without-parole sentence. The Netanyahu ploy was dismissed in Israel as an attempt to gain credit should Pollard be released before the national elections on May 17.

President Clinton, hungry for a big foreign policy triumph, had promised Netanyahu to undertake his third review of Pollard's conviction because the Israeli leader threatened to scuttle the U.S.-brokered Wye accord with the Palestinians. Clinton was expected to reveal his decision shortly after the

January 11 deadline when his senior national security advisers were to make their own recommendations.

Now the president has inexplicably opted to delay his decision probably until the Senate impeachment proceedings are over for the obvious reason that he would not want to anger the Senators who will be voting on whether to remove him from office. (Actually about 60 Senators, including all the members of the intelligence committee, have written him asking not to commute the sentence.)

On the other hand, Clinton could anger the powerful American Jewish community, which usually supports the Democratic Party should he not yield on Pollard. Several prominent Jewish leaders are still agitating for the release of the man some have called "the Jewish Dreyfus," the French Jewish army officer who was convicted of treason but later exonerated when proved to be a victim of anti-Semitism. They will be meeting Attorney General Janet Reno, who still has to submit her recommendation to the White House.

Clinton's decision to delay his response has angered many who believe, as one prominent columnist put it, he "will make one of his peculiar 'deals' over Pollard, in particular one in

which Pollard's life sentence would be commuted and he would be released in 2002." George Anne Geyer added in her syndicated column: "The fact that that will be after Bill Clinton leaves office would provide him with his usual mix of innocence and deniability."

The president's most persistent critic in this matter is Joseph DiGenova, the prosecutor who sent Pollard to jail. He recently told the Centre for Policy Analysis on Palestine here that it was his belief that Clinton "has already decided that he's going to release Mr. Pollard and I think what he's doing now is, he's trying to figure out how to have sex, without having sex, basically."

DiGenova elaborated: "What he's trying to do is try to figure out how to release Mr. Pollard in the least offensive way, at the least offensive moment."

He warned that Pollard remains "a continuing threat" to U.S. national security because all of the documents that still are there, "10 feet by 10 feet by 6 feet, can be interpreted by Mr. Pollard as soon as he gets on the ground."

The battle royale has lately seen countless leaks attributed to several

intelligence officials who are determined that Pollard remain behind bars. Many blame Clinton for this mess. DiGenova asserted: "There is no doubt in my mind that the president sent signals to Mr. Netanyahu which he interpreted — this is what we call 'Clinton signals' — anyone who has ever been in a meeting with him I'm sure knows the way the President, a very delightful man in many ways, obviously can communicate when he wants to... I'm quite sure Mr. Netanyahu was not dreaming when he had discussions with Mr. Clinton and I'm quite certain that Mr. Clinton purposely led him to believe, erroneously, that Mr. Pollard was going to be released."

Robert Novak, another prominent columnist, maintained in his syndicated column, that "it was Clinton — not Netanyahu who raised the prospect of a trade — Pollard in return for a partial Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank" again through his "winking and nodding at the right moment to make people think" what he wants them to think.

But the most devastating account of Israel's espionage appeared this week in The New Yorker. It was written by the respected investigative journalist Seymour Hersh under the blunt title,

"The Traitor."

Clinton's mind-set during those Wye Plantation days and nights last October cajoling the Palestinians and Israelis was provided in Hersh's concluding paragraph. When Clinton was told that the release of Pollard would infuriate the intelligence community, the president replied to the unidentified intelligence officer, "Nah, don't worry about it. It'll blow over."

Besides the then threatened resignation of George Tenet, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, should Pollard return with Netanyahu as demanded by the Israeli, the honourable stand last week of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in telling the president that there are "no compelling foreign policy considerations" to justify releasing Pollard maybe the knock-out punch she was savouring after her unsuccessful bout with the Israeli prime minister in London when she tried to convince Israel to drop its intransigence.

Moreover, Netanyahu can start practising charity at home and show leniency to a more deserving prisoner of conscience, Mordechai Vanunu, who remains in solitary confinement in Israel for telling a London newspaper about Israel's nuclear arsenal.

LETTERS

Best wishes to HM

To the editor:

ON BEHALF of all Jordanian students studying in the U.K. and abroad, I would like to thank God on the safe return home of His Majesty King Hussein, after successful treatment for cancer in the United States.

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Jordanian family on the safe return home of our beloved leader, and we ask God to keep him in good health and to give him the strength to keep on ruling the great nation of Jordan.

Watching His Majesty bring his aircraft to a standstill on his soil brought tears to all our eyes, and regrets in our hearts, that we could not have been with the Jordanian family to celebrate this most happy occasions.

Welcome home 'Sayedna'! and may God Bless you.

K.J. Makdahi,
 University of London,
 King's College London,
 UK.

To the editor:

I WOULD like to offer my sincere greetings to His Majesty King Hussein and the people of Jordan on the occasion of 'Eid Al Fitr'.

As a long-time visitor to your country, with many Jordanian friends and associates, I have great feelings of affection towards it. I am able to share a little in the obvious joy at King Hussein's return. You are blessed with a remarkable Monarch, a true statesman of whose ilk there are sadly too few in this age. I wish him and the Royal family well.

G. Haigh
 growler1@pacific.net.ph

To the editor:

I WOULD like to use your esteemed newspaper in order to welcome His Majesty back to his Kingdom and his people.

As you know, many Israelis were concerned and have sent their best wishes to His Majesty during his illness.

We are very happy that His Majesty is well and back in his country and we all hope that he will continue to be a catalyst of the peace process in the region which is so needed for us all.

I hope that His Majesty will come to visit us in the near future.

May God grant His Majesty long years of health and prosperity.

Yossi Fischer
 Israel

OECD: Danish krone at risk from post-euro monetary turbulence

THE WHIZ KID.
Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

THE BETTER HALF.

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GLASBERGEN

"I'm not worried about the Y2K thing. Our computer is so slow, it won't notice the problem until years from now!"

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD

by Henri Arnold and Miss Kipling

Unscramble these four Jumbles,
one letter to each square, to
form four ordinary words.

CADYE

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TINGY

HELSIG

WUCREF

Leave him alone, he helps
me with tests

**WHAT THE
STREET THUGS
CONSIDERED
THE WHIZ KID**

Now arrange the circled letters
to form the surprise answer; see
guessed by the above cartoon.

Print answer: A

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(Answers below)

Yesterday's Jumbles: CREEK SHLY MEADOW JUMBLE
Answer: How Mom felt while she darned socks

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Muasher hints that Arab Bank should lead development, modernisation process of the banking sector

*** DESPITE THE tall buildings, and the annual profits achieved the Arab banking system is still traditional and, as such, it will face major challenges over the coming few years as a result of the liberalisation of financial services and the globalisation in the banking sector, said Jordan National Bank Board Chairman Rajai Muasher. He noted that Arab banks have been unable to upgrade the Arab capital market and did not succeed in creating the financing mechanism required to advance the economic development sufficiently enough to remedy key imbalances suffered by most Arab economies.

Speaking in an interview about the challenges resulting from the liberalisation of financial services, Muasher said the Jordanian banking system, like other Arab banking systems, is a traditional one conducting normal and customary functions.

"It did not enter until now many of the fields and financial tools especially needed in the capital market," Muasher said, attributing that to the absence of legislations that would regulate these financing aspects and tools.

The board chairman who held the post of industry and trade minister in the past cited as examples regulations for mutual funds, long-term financing through bonds and trading in these bonds in financial markets beside many other tools which could be used. He indicated there are no mechanisms, which are usually issued by the Central Bank, to regulate the tools in addition to the absence of legislations needed to issue them and

Lebanese banking system described as sound by chief financial examiner

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanon's chief financial examiner has assured investors that commercial lending posed no threat to the integrity of the country's banking system.

"The system is sound and quality assets continue to advance, helped by better management and more transparency in the industry," said Muhammad Baasiri, chairman of the Banking Control Commission.

Shadows were cast on the loan portfolio last year when Standard and Poor's said Lebanon was among the countries with apparently robust banking systems which were in fact vulnerable.

The rating agency said up to 40 per cent of the credit extended by banks could turn into bad loans if the economy dipped into recession. Bankers say doubtful loans comprised \$1.6 billion of the \$13.1 billion extended by banks up to September.

Provisioning, which stood at \$1.2 billion and covered 75 per cent of doubtful loans, is respectable by international standards, they said.

Lebanon's GDP growth fell from seven per cent in 1995 to 3.5 per cent in 1997 and two per cent in the first half of last year, according to Beirut's Banque Audi. The central bank said growth reached four per cent last year.

The Banking Control Commission (BCC) comprises five members assisted by a team of 70 examiners. It was headed at its foundation in 1967 by current Prime Minister Selim Al Hoss.

Baasiri is the first to serve two terms as head of the BCC.

He said the commission closely monitors and approves necessary provisions for doubtful debt and holds regular meetings with banks' management and external auditors.

"We conduct on-site and off-site examinations and look at most of the individual loans for each bank," said Baasiri, insisting the scrutiny of the system has not been hampered by strict banking secrecy laws.

Lebanon is one of the last bastions of banking secrecy in the world, offering more confidentiality than Switzerland.

"There has been no unusual fluctuations in the growth of deposits to suggest money laundering," said Baasiri, pointing out there is an agreement brokered by the banks association setting forth procedures to combat money laundering.

He is confident Lebanon will return to its position as the banking capital of the Middle East, helped by a consolidation in the sector and more banks going public.

Israeli market recovery not seen till second half

TEL AVIV (R) — The Israeli stock market can look forward to falling interest rates, faster economic growth and progress on both economic reform and the peace process — but not until after the May 17 elections, analysts said.

"In the first half, the market will be trading in the shadow of elections," said Keith Phillips, Israel analyst for Societe Generale in London. "The lack of economic direction is important. I can't see any significant move on interest rates, so I can't see the market moving either."

Analysts said they were less concerned with who wins the elections — now shaping into a three-way battle between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and two left-of-centre opponents — than that they produce a stable government able to tackle economic reforms and Middle East peace.

Most analysts said it makes little difference who wins the May 17 vote because all the candidates would pursue similar policies, including Netanyahu, whose commitment to the Oslo peace pact with the Palestinians is unclear.

"If he's elected, Netanyahu will move forward with the peace process because 80 per cent of the population supports it," one analyst said.

Analysis for the most part discounted the near-term threat of stepped-up government spending in the run-up to elections.

"You can't put another couple of billion shekels into the budget so quickly. There will be changes in the budget and budget arrangements law, but they won't be significant," said Micha Goldberg, head of research at Nessuah Zannex Securities.

Nevertheless, most analysts said the Bank of Israel would adopt a more cautious line than the fundamentals demanded until the political situation was clarified.

Israeli inflation is expected to fall to about five per cent this year, after a brief surge in September-November that raised the 1998 figure to over eight per cent. The central bank's base rate is currently an annual 3.5 per cent.

"Interest rates will fall very slowly, maybe 0.5-0.75 percentage point, until election day. It depends on the extent to which (Netanyahu) engages in election economics," said Gidi Halpern, a portfolio manager at Bank Hapoalim's Peilim division.

For a market like Tel Aviv, which is driven by interest rates, that is not good news. Besides slowing the economy, high rates discourage equity investments.

"Forget it," said Halpern, when asked if retail investors would be coming back to the stock market after a five-year absence. He said with two-year deposits paying an inflation-linked six per cent, stocks held no attraction.

The good news is set to begin on election day May 17 — or June 1 if prime

ministerial elections go into a second round.

Analysts argue that interest rates should begin coming down just as an upswing in the business cycle begins.

Brokerage house Nessuah Zannex said in a report it is looking for the economy to grow at an annual rate of three per cent in the second half from a preliminary 1.9 per cent for all of 1998. Interest rates could fall three percentage points by the end of the year, leaving real rates steep but punters happy, it said.

"What's more important is the momentum going down than the actual rates," Goldberg said.

Foreign investors bailed out of Tel Aviv in the wake of Russia's financial crisis last year, but analysts are sanguine about the prospects of luring them back during 1999.

They say Tel Aviv share prices are cheap, with one analyst estimating that shares on the Tel Aviv 100 benchmark index are trading at 12.5 times 1999 prospective earnings. All the foreigners need now is to get over the elections hump.

"It looks like one of the most stable environments to be in," said Phillips, comparing Tel Aviv to other emerging markets.

But even with a stronger second half, analysts are not looking for a banner year on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange. One analyst said he would be happy with a 10 per cent gain, compared with 1998's 3.3 per cent rise, which was a 12.4 per cent loss in dollar terms.

"I don't think it's going to be a terrific year, but it should be better than 1998," Phillips said.

Ford to cut 8,800 jobs

DEARBORN, Michigan (AFP) — Ford Motor Co. has announced here that it would slash 8,800 jobs worldwide and expected to record total charges of \$630 million after taxes.

In a statement released at its headquarters here, Ford said it anticipated a pre-tax charge of about \$730 million for retirement and separation programmes.

Under the special programmes, which had been previously announced, the world's number two carmaker said that 4,600 jobs would be cut in Latin America, 2,200 in North America and 2,000 in Europe.

It was providing additional details on charges it expects to take following directional estimates of two of the charges in its third-quarter 10-Q report filed with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission last October.

Ford said it anticipated a pre-tax charge of about \$110 million to write off its net exposure to Kia Motors Co., including Ford's share of Mazda Motor Co.'s exposure to Kia.

Ford sold its shares in Kia in a private transaction that closed in the fourth quarter.

Ford also expects to record a pre-tax charge of about \$110 million linked to the transfer of its transmission plant in Batavia, Ohio, to a new joint venture company formed by Ford and Germany's ZF Friedrichshafen AG.

The joint venture company will build continuously variable transmissions and the transaction is due to be completed in the first quarter of this year.

Meanwhile Ford's Board of Directors declared a first-quarter dividend of 46 cents a share on the company's Class B and common stock, unchanged from the fourth quarter of 1998.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You've had lots of great career opportunities lately, although it may have seemed more like a constant hassle with folks who outrank you. They wanted to see if you could handle more responsibility. By now, you've probably made your move, either upward or laterally, but hopefully into a career that fits you well.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Looks like there's some sort of a buzz out there, possibly concerning your career. You might think it's something you can't do anything about. Why pay attention if your vote won't count? Well, if something's going to change, you want to know about it before it happens, so you can get into the right position early, before the rush.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) There's a way you can earn more money, but you'll have to figure out what it is. Someone you love can give you a shove in the right direction. In fact, this person may have been pushing you for quite some time. Use skills you've already acquired and education you've already received and you can have the life you've been dreaming about.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) You could receive some kind of gift today from a person who's far away. This could be a legacy or a bit of friendly advice pointing you in the direction you should go to achieve wealth and social status. You're caregiver first and foremost, but it wouldn't hurt to have a little something in the bank.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) You could receive an unexpected gift today, possibly an increase in the value of your stocks or a payment you're receiving. In any case, it's coming to you partially because of the work you've done and partially because of the strength of your character. It will add more to your personal confidence than to your spending cash.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) This is an excellent day to find a nice gift for someone you love. You're generous, so you don't always get around to doing things when you first think of them. So even if it's not your dear friend's birthday or anything, a little gift would be a thoughtful gesture. It might make up for some things you've said that you wish you hadn't.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 23) The highest form of enlightenment is to serve one who serves. As a Libra, it seems natural for others to serve you. But for you to follow others around, doing whatever they want, providing for their every need... well, you don't want to make a habit of it. Today, however, it's practically a requirement. If you do it cheerfully, you'll make more points.

SCORPIO: (October 24 to November 21) That Aquarius sun focuses your attention more on domestic matters. The Pisces moon is in your solar fifth house of love. Jupiter is in Pisces, too, making you lucky in love right now. Mercury in too, making you lucky in love right now. Mercury in too, making you lucky in love right now. Mercury in too, making you lucky in love right now.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) There's something you want for your home, and there might be a way to fling the deal. You have several options to choose from. You can either get the item for less money, or you can generate more money and get the item retail. It isn't clear which route you'll choose, but it does look like you're getting what you want.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) Your intuition should be working well today. It could be prompted by a clue from someone you admire. This person could be doing or saying something that leads you to the next logical conclusion. Is it logic or intuition at work? It doesn't matter. Inside information today will lead you to make a shrewd deal. Follow a hunch.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) All sorts of valuables continue to pour into your pocket. You may have to share with a partner, but that's OK. There's plenty to go around. Investments you make now should turn out well for you, generally speaking. If you're betting on yourself, or your ability to advance in your career, the odds are in your favour.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) Abundance is coming your way — abundance of love, abundance of attention, maybe even abundance of money. You could be much more influential than you ever dreamed possible. Even people who don't usually listen to anybody could be listening to you now, so choose your words carefully. Stay pragmatic and realistic.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, JANUARY 22, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You have an inner certainty that everything's going to turn out right, even if you can't figure out how. That's OK. Having faith in your intended outcome is much more important. Go ahead and visualise yourself already successful. Encourage your team to do the same thing. These little mind tricks can be quite effective.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You know what needs to be done, and you've probably been hard at work doing it. That's just the way you are. But somebody who's a little short of temper could be getting impatient. Tell that person, nicely, to cool it. You'll get the job done as fast as you can. Try to stay flexible, even under trying circumstances.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You're amazing today. You're agile and quick, and an inspiration to others. You'd be the first choice for anybody's team. Continue to push hard on your career goals, but give yourself some time to party. You've worked hard this week, and you have plenty of reasons to celebrate. If not, you'll make some up by the time you and the gang get together.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) Looks like somebody's trying to browbeat you in some way, but it might just be the other person's brusque tone of voice. You don't like to be talked to with any sort of anger. The person who's upsetting you today is most likely just an angry individual at times, so don't take it personally.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) The moon's transit through Aries can get you a little agitated. Its going through your solar ninth house of travel, and its going to come right up against Saturn, which is already there. Saturn represents history, so if you can go back to a familiar place this weekend, that would be perfect. If you can do it with an old friend, even better.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) You're a thrifty person normally, but right now you just don't feel like it. You'd rather go out and buy all those fabulous things on sale. If you can convince yourself that you're actually saving by doing that, you might be able to work a deal. It looks like there's something out there that does have your name written all over it.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 23) Somebody you admire

thinks you're pretty cute. Truth is, you feel the same way back, although you'd never admit it. Anyway, this person may have an outrageous plan for you today. Sure it's crazy, but what the heck? You only live once, right? Well, you may not be too sure about that, but you do know when an offer is just too good to refuse.

SCORPIO: (October 24 to November 21) You're generally a calm, placid sort of person, at least on the exterior. Deep down inside, you're more like a tiger, and that tiger could come to the surface today. Somebody you work with is irritating you so much you can hardly stand it. Don't get into a pointless fight. Keep your cool, and your superiority will be obvious.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You're in the mood for love, and taking a trip, not necessarily in that order. If the one you love has a practical streak, you'll get demerits for leaving work early, so don't even try it. Instead, make sure your check is in the bank before you pack up your picnic basket and head for the hills.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) It looks like there's some sort of disruption today concerning home, family or real estate. Maybe a mess needs to be cleaned up at home. Maybe you need to have a discussion with a family member about a misunderstanding. If it's real estate, it's a fixer-upper that you'd find. Whatever it is, it'll be worth the effort.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) Today, you're on the path to a new discovery. Don't try to do it all by yourself. Just as you pass information along to one who needs it, so can someone else give information to you. From where you're standing, the answer is not obvious. From where the other person is standing, it is. All you need to change is your perspective.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) This looks like a good day to go for promotions. Someone in authority has new plans and wants to put them into action. If you can find a way to help, you'll be a valuable resource. You need to be creative, inventive and maybe even a little assertive. If the other person doesn't come to you with a plan, take one to him or her.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

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Viking raider leaves fleet in disarray

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Christian Ruud, from skiing-mad Norway, left a gaping hole in the Australian men's singles draw when he sank the Spanish Armada flagship here Wednesday.

The 26-year-old Norwegian, ranked 86th in the world, outlasted Alex Corregia of Spain, the No. 2 seed, in four sets 3-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-4.

Only nine of the men's 16 seeds had survived the first two rounds.

The top seeded players left in action were Pat Rafter of Australia, the third seed, and Andre Agassi of the United States, No. 5, after the withdrawal of Marcelo Rios with a stress fracture of the back on the opening day.

Either Rafter or Agassi could take over as World No. 1 from Pete Sampras if they win this tournament but Rafter, who on Wednesday brushed aside fellow Australian Mark Woodforde, faces his first serious test when he tackles Thomas Enqvist in the third round.

The Swede has won his 10 matches in Australia in the last two weeks, winning the Australian Hardcourt Championships and Kooyong Classic.

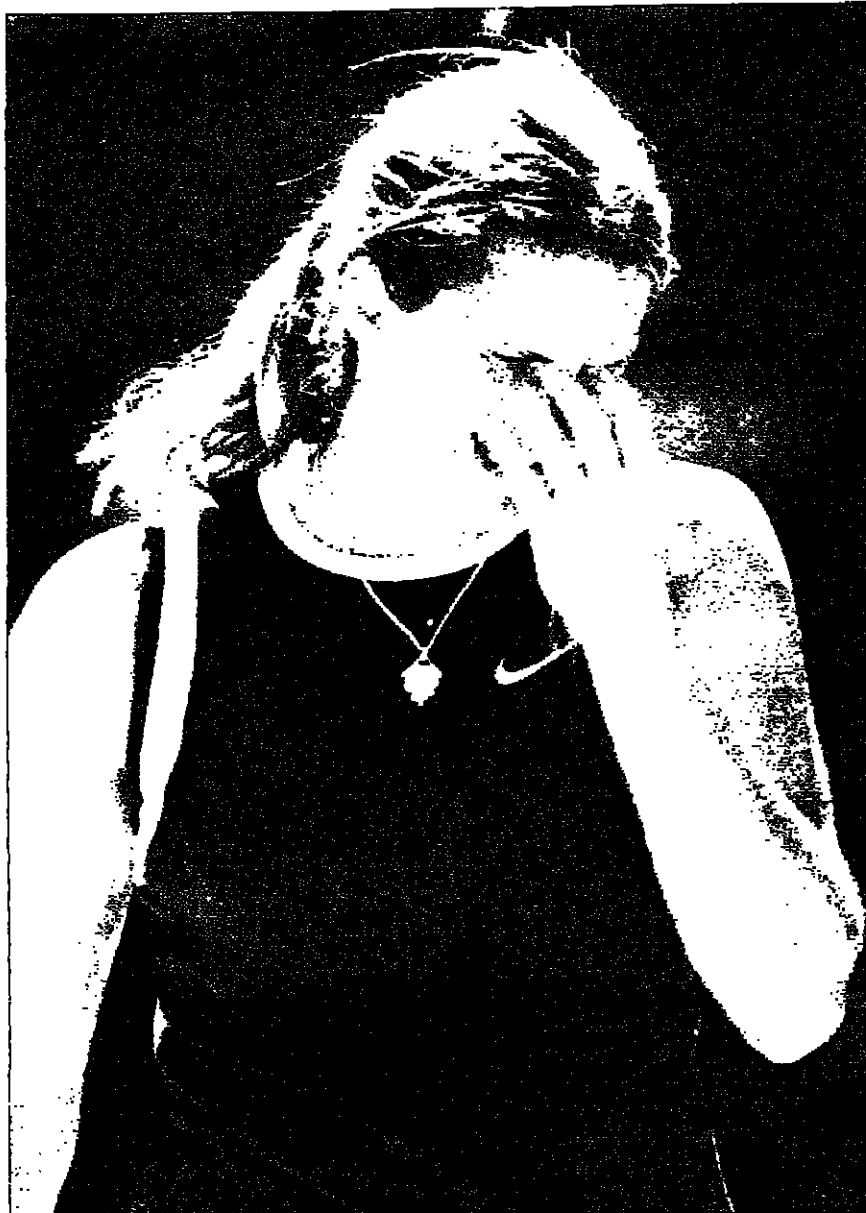
The women's competition has gone largely to form.

Top seed Lindsay Davenport and Wimbledon champion Jana Novotna continued to expose the limitations of their lower-ranked opponents and the biggest upset was the defeat of Switzerland's eighth seed Patty Schnyder by promising French woman Amelie Mauresmo.

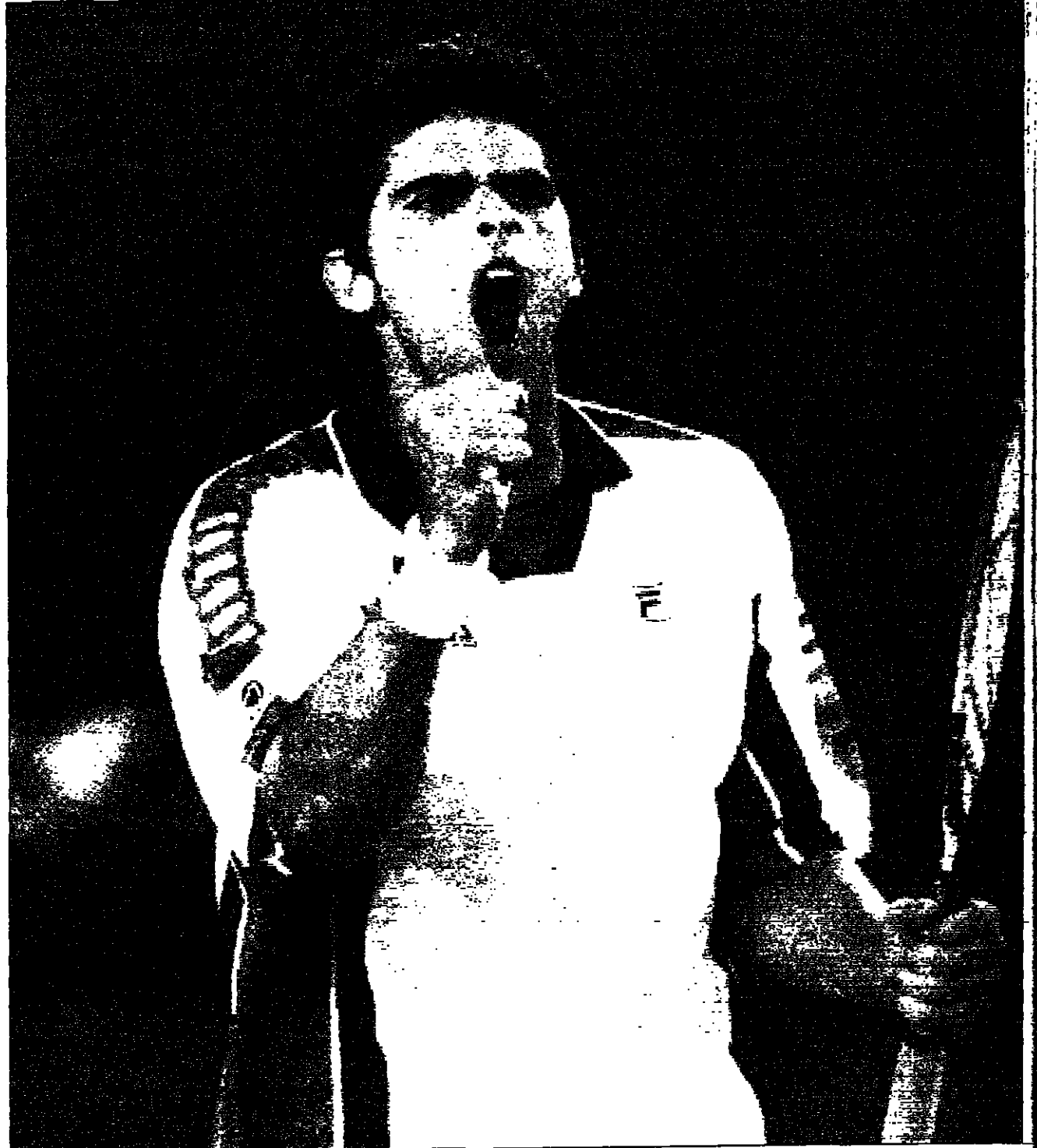
Davenport beat Argentina's Florencia Labat 6-2, 6-1 in 47 minutes but Novotna was cross with herself for dropping a set against Slovakian Henrieta Nagyova, who reached the fourth round here last year.

She now plays Spaniard Maria Antonia Sanchez Lorenzo, who brought Jennifer Capriati's mini-revival to an end.

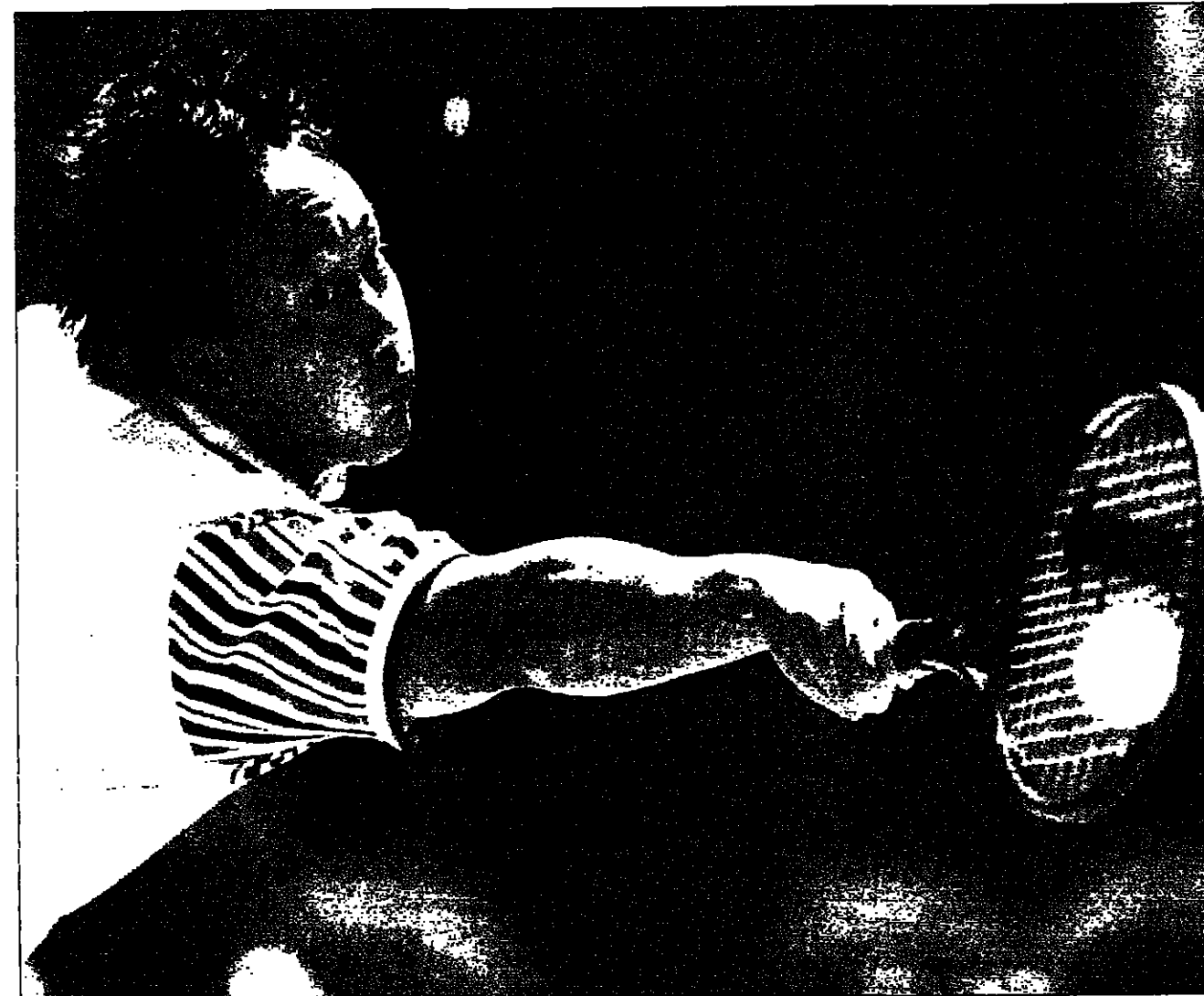
Spain's much-vaunted fleet was left



Amelie Mauresmo of France reacts during her 6-7, 6-3, 7-5 win over Patty Schnyder of Switzerland at the Australian Open Tennis Championships in Melbourne, Australia, Wednesday, January 20, 1999 (AP photo)



Mark Philippoussis of Australia celebrates his victory over Michael Chang of the USA after their marathon five set second round match at the 1999 Australian Open in Melbourne 20 January. Philippoussis defeated Chang 7-6, 2-6, 6-3, 5-7, 7-5 (AFP photo)



Michael Chang (File photo)

in tatters with only Juan Alonso still afloat of the 14 Spanish contingent who headed for Melbourne. He was due to meet defending champion Petr Korda of the Czech Republic of Thursday.

Alonso is best known for going out with Martina Hingis last year.

Spain's No. 4 seed Carlos Moya, the French Open champion, lost to Germany's Nicolas Kiefer and 12th seed Albert Costa was put out by Martin Damm of the Czech Republic.

Local hero Mark Philippoussis, 14th seed, broke Michael Chang in the 11th game of the fifth set to hold serve for the match and set up the possibility of a replay of the U.S. Open final with Rafter in the fourth round.

Tim Henman advanced to the third round of the Australian Open for only the second time after surviving a scare against Australian serve and volleyer Sandon Stolle.

Stolle, ranked 240 in the world, had the sixth seed and No. 1 Briton struggling in the first three sets, before he pulled his game around to wrap up a 4-6, 7-5, 4-6, 6-1, 6-4 victory in three hours six minutes.

Henman will now line up against huge-serving Swiss Marc Rosset in the third round.

South African Wayne Ferreira, back in form after a string of injuries, set up a third round clash with ninth seed Richard Krajicek.

Ferreira beat Czech Daniel Vacek 6-4, 2-6, 6-3, 6-1 while Krajicek, who made the semi-finals here in 1992 and won Wimbledon in 1996, cruised past Argentinian Mariano Zabaleta 6-3, 6-2, 7-5.

Slovakian Karol Kucera, a surprise semi-finalist last year, continued his quiet but steady progress, disposing of Italian Davide Sanguinetti 7-5, 6-1, 6-4.

The number seven seed, who last year knocked out World No. 1 Pete Sampras, now plays young Russian Marat Safin, who knocked out Brazil's former French Open champion Gustavo Kuerten in the fifth set.

According to the players...

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Australian Open briefs on Wednesday: Venus Williams owns the fastest women's serve at the Australian Open and has struck a blow for the women's tour by clocking the same velocity as Michael Chang.

The powerful Williams' fastest serve registered 185kmh (115mph), the same as Chang, which was the 43rd fastest among the men.

The top men's serve so far belongs to Richard Krajicek and Greg Rusedski with 213 kmh (132mph).

Jeff Tarango's view on the festering Petr Korda drug controversy?

"It's just a really dark moment in tennis, and I wish that they would resolve it, you know, quicker than the impeachment trial."

Professional tennis players are not always the ones to ask about opponents. Nineteen-year-old Amelie Mauresmo of France was asked what she knew about her next opponent after knocking out Swiss eighth seed Patty Schnyder.

"Nothing. She's Australian?" Her third round opponent Nicole Pratt is indeed Australian. The 25-year-old has never got beyond the second round in eight Australian Opens.

Lindsay Davenport's most cherished possession is not an expensive car nor a piece of jewellery, but a fax sent to her by former greats, Martina Navratilova, Chris Evert, Billie Jean King and Tracy Austin when she reached the top spot.

"It is hanging in my bedroom at home. They all wrote little messages saying welcome to the club and stuff like that."

Even Sylvia Plischke of Austria was not proud of her upset win over

Germany's Anke Huber of Germany.

"I don't think that's what Grand Slam tennis is about," she said of a match which coughed up 152 unforced errors.

A slip of the tongue... International Tennis Federation president Brian Tobin defending tennis against drug proliferation.

"The point we are trying to make here is the sport itself is not rotten. It's not as if we suddenly uncovered a whole cache of dopers, you know. It's not like cycling or football... I didn't say that sorry."

What can you do when you've got a tennis elbow? Try magnet therapy, says Lindsay Davenport.

It worked for the best player in women's tennis, who has been struggling with the injury for six months.

"It's amazing," she says. "I mean, my arm, my elbow was bad for the last six months of last year. It hurt a lot through December and I swear I did this magnet therapy thing."

She said she put her arm under a machine holding a giant magnet for five hours and hey presto... "It has not hurt me one bit since."

Marat Safin, the 'next big thing' in tennis, had to do some quick thinking during his press conference after beating Gustavo Kuerten.

A observant reporter glimpsed a ring on the young Russian's finger.

"Are you engaged, as you are wearing a ring?"

"No, no, just a compromise."

"Just a girlfriend?"

"Yeah, Spanish. I mean, I'm 18 years old."

"Is that a wedding ring then?"

"No, no, on the right one, on the right one."

Feisty McEnroe wants Davis Cup upgraded

NEW YORK (AP) — Almost 40 now and a member of the Hall of Fame, John McEnroe is still feisty and ready to defend the United States' honour at the Davis Cup.

He is convinced he could do as good a job, at least in doubles, as most of the players showing up lately.

McEnroe, elected Tuesday with Australian Ken McGregor, never has quite figured out the deterioration of Davis Cup on the tennis landscape. Many players prefer to show up at smaller tournaments where they can earn ranking points and prize money, both unavailable, at the Davis Cup.

When top players make that choice, it leaves McEnroe puzzled and troubled. "What more can you ask than a chance to represent your country?" he said. "Tennis is a selfish, individual

game.

There's no better way to blow off tension than to play Davis Cup," McEnroe played Davis Cup tennis for 12 years, posting a 59-10 record. He holds six Cup records, including most singles victories (41), and seems almost as proud of those wins as the seven Grand Slam titles, 77 singles and 77 doubles championships that led to his election to the Hall of Fame in his first year of eligibility. He was part of five winning Davis Cup teams.

Sometimes, McEnroe said, he played Davis Cup at times when he might have preferred to be doing something else.

"It wasn't easy to lose to (Jimmy) Connors in five sets at Wimbledon, then go play Davis Cup," he said. "I was exhausted, but what better thing

could I do? "The tradition of the sport is important. Davis Cup is important for the game. It's bigger than the players in my opinion. Others feel differently, apparently." Last fall, with Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi saying they wanted no part of it, the United States Davis Cup team was composed of ailing Jim Courier, who pulled out because of an arm injury, veteran Todd Martin and two rookies, Justin Gimelstob and Jan-Michael Gambill. They lost 4-1 to Italy.

McEnroe was stung by the outcome. "I can lose as easy as they did and bring some energy to it," he said. "I'm not quite sure why people don't think I can play doubles. I'm hitting better than I have for six or eight years. My stated goal is to be the George Foreman of tennis." That said, there has been no

invitation to play. So McEnroe will do his hitting in seniors matches. He is No. 1 on the Nueven Seniors Tour with eight victories this season. He also functions as the conscience of the sport, reminding players to think about their priorities.

"When you look back on your career, what do you remember?" McEnroe said. "Being part of the Davis Cup or your ranking and the money you won? You don't put aside the chance to represent your country." In the first round of the next Davis Cup, the United States will play at England. The Americans' assignment will be all the more difficult if its top players stay home and the British team includes Top 10 players like Tim Henman and Greg Rusedski.

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Federal grand jury to begin hearing testimony in Salt Lake case

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Independent investigations of the widespread Olympic bribery scandal are taking a toll.

An IOC member — one of 13 implicated by IOC investigations — resigned Tuesday, Pjotr Haggman of Finland, reportedly working for the Salt Lake City bid committee and for 20 months in an Ontario government job initiated by the Toronto committee bidding for the 1996 Summer Games.

Haggman said she had been "naïve in my trust in other people." Haggman's ex-husband, Brian, reportedly worked briefly for the Salt Lake City bid committee and for 20 months in an Ontario government job initiated by the Toronto committee bidding for the 1996 Summer Games.

Bjorne Haggman's job with Ontario's Natural Resources Ministry was arranged with the help of the Toronto committee that bid for the 1996 Summer Games. The committee also paid the Haggmans \$650-a-month rent in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario.

John Henderson, who was head of the Toronto bid committee, said the rent money was supposed to be repaid by the Haggmans, but he was unsure if it was. He denied it was an attempt to win Pjotr Haggman's vote.

In the wake of Pjotr Haggman's resignation, the Salt Lake City bid committee said it was drafting a report on the scandal, written by IOC President Richard Pound, who has as many as 16 IOC members.

The report said the members might face expulsion for accepting more than \$780,000 in payments and gifts from Salt Lake City Olympic officials during and after the successful effort to play host to the 2002 Winter Games.

Pound also was quoted in Wednesday's *Kitchener-Waterloo Record* as saying he himself was once handed a \$1 million bribe offer in connection with a television deal.

He cited the declined offer as evidence of the high standards of some IOC officials.

Pjotr Haggman was among nine IOC members accused of various violations who faced possible expulsion, an official close to the investigation told The Associated Press. Four other members have been cited for minor violations and face warnings or no sanctions.

While Haggman was the first IOC member to resign since the scandal broke, three other Olympic officials also have quit.

They are Salt Lake Organizing Committee President Frank Jolkik and Senior Vice President Dave Johnson, and Alfredo La Mont, the U.S. Olympic Committee's senior director of international relations.

Tom Welch, who headed the Salt Lake bid committee, resigned in 1997 after being accused of spousal abuse.

Welch's former secretary, Stephanie Pate, was to talk to federal investigators in Salt Lake City Wednesday.

Her attorney, David Watkiss, said she was subpoenaed to appear before a federal court panel, called a grand jury, but asked instead to meet with investigators privately.

Pate was not a "player" in the bribery scandal, Watkiss said. "We just did what we were instructed to do," Watkiss said, using the plural form lawyers sometimes use for their clients.

Watkiss said he assumes investigators want to ask Pate about the reports of lavish gifts, cash, scholarships and free medical care given to IOC members by Salt Lake bid boosters.

"We're going to meet with the government and then the government can decide whether it wishes to present Ms. Pate before a grand jury," Watkiss said Tuesday. "The grand jury appearance can be much shorter once the government understands what she knows and what she doesn't know." The lawyer said he advised Pate against talking to other investigators looking into the Olympic mess until after she talks with the Department of Justice.

"Our bottom line is we're trying to cooperate with the Department of Justice investigation to the best of our ability," Watkiss said.

Other lawyers representing key players in Salt Lake's bid have either not returned calls or

made no comments when contacted by The Associated Press on Tuesday.

A Justice Department official confirmed that more than one subpoena for grand jury testimony has been issued. The Salt Lake Tribune, without citing a source, said as many as a dozen people have been subpoenaed.

In addition to the investigations by the federal government and the IOC, a probe is being made by SLOC's ethics committee, which is due Feb. 11 but could be finished sooner.

USOC's investigation should be finished in February, FBI spokesman George Dougherty said Tuesday the investigation likely will take months.

"These types of investigations take a long time ... but we understand the urgency here to get this matter resolved quickly and so we're going to expedite our investigation," Dougherty said. "Obviously, we don't want it to drag out for a year or so." He declined to give specifics about the status of the investigation.

In other developments: A member of an Olympic promotional group said at least two IOC members accepted offers of prostitutes from the Amsterdam committee that bid for the 1992 Summer Games. Prostitution is licensed in parts of Amsterdam.

"I was there and saw it, IOC members being offered women and two accepting," said Prince Frederic von Saxe-Lauenberg, a member of the Pierre de Coubertin International Committee. He said the two were African members, but declined to name them.

Von Saxe-Lauenberg said IOC members also were given video cassette recorders and their wives were offered diamond bracelets by the Amsterdam committee. Roel Walraven, a member of Amsterdam's bid committee, admitted that IOC members had been given VCRs, but said he knew nothing "about visits to brothels or diamonds in hotel rooms."

Melbourne's bid committee for the 1996 Olympics arranged for an IOC delegate's daughter to play with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, a bid member said Wednesday.

Winners of last 10 Monte Carlo rallies

MONTE CARLO (R) — Winners of the Monte Carlo Rally, opening race of the world championship, in last 10 years:

1990 - Didier Auriol (France) Lancia Delta
1991 - Carlos Sainz (Spain) Toyota Celica
1992 - Didier Auriol (France) Lancia HF
1993 - Didier Auriol (France) Toyota Celica
1994 - Francois Delecour (France) Ford Escort
1995 - Carlos Sainz (Spain) Subaru Impreza
1996 - Patrick Bernardini (France) Ford Escort
1997 - Piero Liati (Italy) Subaru Impreza
1998 - Carlos Sainz (Spain) Toyota Corolla
1999 - Tommi Makinen (Finland) Mitsubishi Lancer

Tommi Makinen, right, and his co-driver Risto Mannisenmaki from Finland, driving a Mitsubishi Lancer, jubilate after winning the 67th Monte-Carlo Rally, at Monaco, Wednesday January 20, 1999 (AP photo)

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1999 - Tommi Makinen (Finland) Mitsubishi Lancer

A big retirement — maybe — more rumours and another delay

NEW YORK (AP) — Dennis Rodman dropped out. Antonio McDyess deliberated. Rod Strickland wavered and the National Basketball Association's Association lockout settlement was delayed once again.

It was another day of waiting, wondering and waffling Tuesday, with the start of training camps and free agent signings pushed back until Thursday as lawyers for owners and players haggled over the fine print of the new collective bargaining agreement.

"It'll get done. It always gets done," agent David Falk said. "This just gives us more time to talk to people and refine our numbers."

The best example of the craziness was the "retirement" of Rodman.

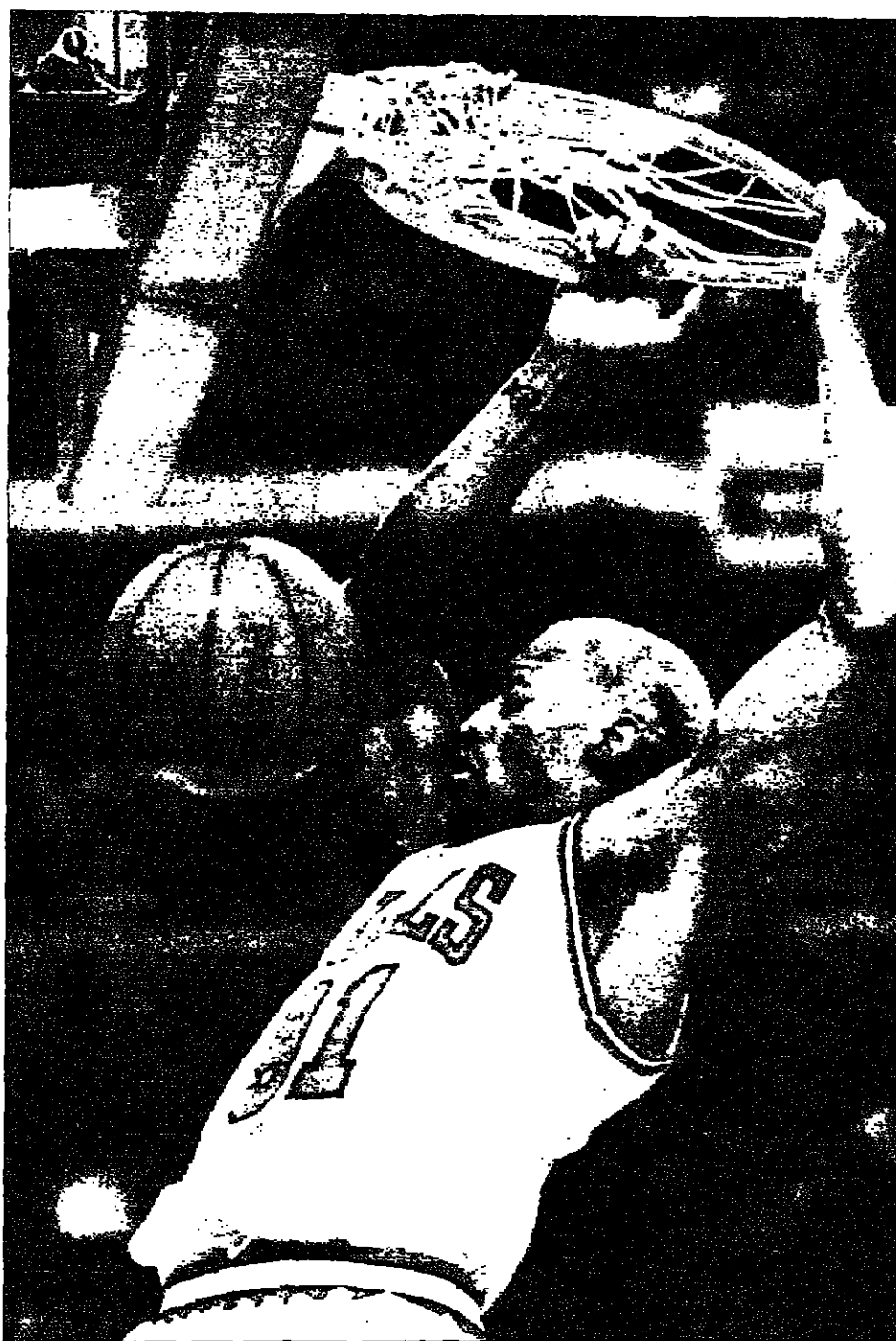
Hours after his agent, Dwight Manley, announced Rodman was leaving the game for good, the NBA's most outlandish player denied it.

"I'm not going to play this year," Rodman told Fox Sports News. "I am in limbo, but I'm not going to say I'm retired."

That's not how his former coach heard it. In a strange twist earlier in the day, Chuck Daly of the Orlando Magic said he had heard Rodman had been traded to the New York Knicks for Buck Williams — a rumour that was quickly shot down.

Rodman, whose multi-colored hair, body piercings and tattoos made a fashion statement across the NBA and beyond, has become the latest star to leave Chicago as the Bulls rebuild after the retirement of Michael Jordan.

For now, the league loses a seven-time rebounding leader who once donned a wedding gown, kicked a cameraman, head-butted a referee, dated Madonna and married Carmen



Dennis Rodman (File photo)

Electra.

Falk's top free agent client, Strickland, was reportedly miffed at the offer being made by the Washington Wizards. Falk was asked to comment on the status of Strickland's negotiations, but talk around the league was that the point

guard was considering signing with another team. McDyess, meanwhile, put off for another day a decision on where he'll play — Denver or Phoenix.

"It defies logic in my opinion," Suns owner Jerry Colangelo said. "We think this is a great spot for him."

He seemed very happy here. We love him as a young guy and a future star in this league. But a lot of things have happened this offseason."

If McDyess chooses to move, it will leave the Suns scrambling to execute a backup plan. There was

widespread speculation that they would turn their attention toward Tom Gugliotta, who was thought to have narrowed his choices to staying with the Minnesota Timberwolves or joining the Nuggets.

The Nuggets also were wondering whether they would be spurned by Gugliotta in the event that McDyess stays in Phoenix. If so, they were expected to look to sign free-agent center Vlade Divac.

Divac flew back from Europe on Tuesday, and will have a choice of signing with Denver, Phoenix or Sacramento.

Also Tuesday, The Associated Press learned that John Starks and Chris Mills are the players who will be traded from the Knicks to the Golden State Warriors for Latrell Sprewell. Word of the Sprewell trade got out Monday night, just a few hours after another major trade was revealed — Scottie Pippen going from the Chicago Bulls to the Houston Rockets.

The Bulls also have sign-and-trade deals worked out for Luc Longley and Steve Kerr, and a sign-and-trade deal of Scott Burrell for Brent Barry was believed to be in the works.

Colangelo confirmed that the Suns will trade three of the five players they have under contract — Mark Bryant, Martin Muursepp and Bubba Wells — for Longley.

In another agreed-upon deal, the Seattle SuperSonics were set to send center Jim McIlvaine to the New Jersey Nets for veteran forwards Michael Cage and Don MacLean.

Makinen clinches victory at Monte Carlo Rally

MONTE CARLO, Monaco (AP) — Three-time world champion Tommi Makinen of Finland won Wednesday's Monte Carlo Rally, beating his nearest rival by almost two minutes.

Makinen, driving a Mitsubishi, had an overall time of 4 hours, 33 minutes, 46.2 seconds.

Compatriot Juha Kankkunen, who drove a Subaru, was second in 4 hours, 35 minutes, 35.2 seconds, according to times which were subject to confirmation.

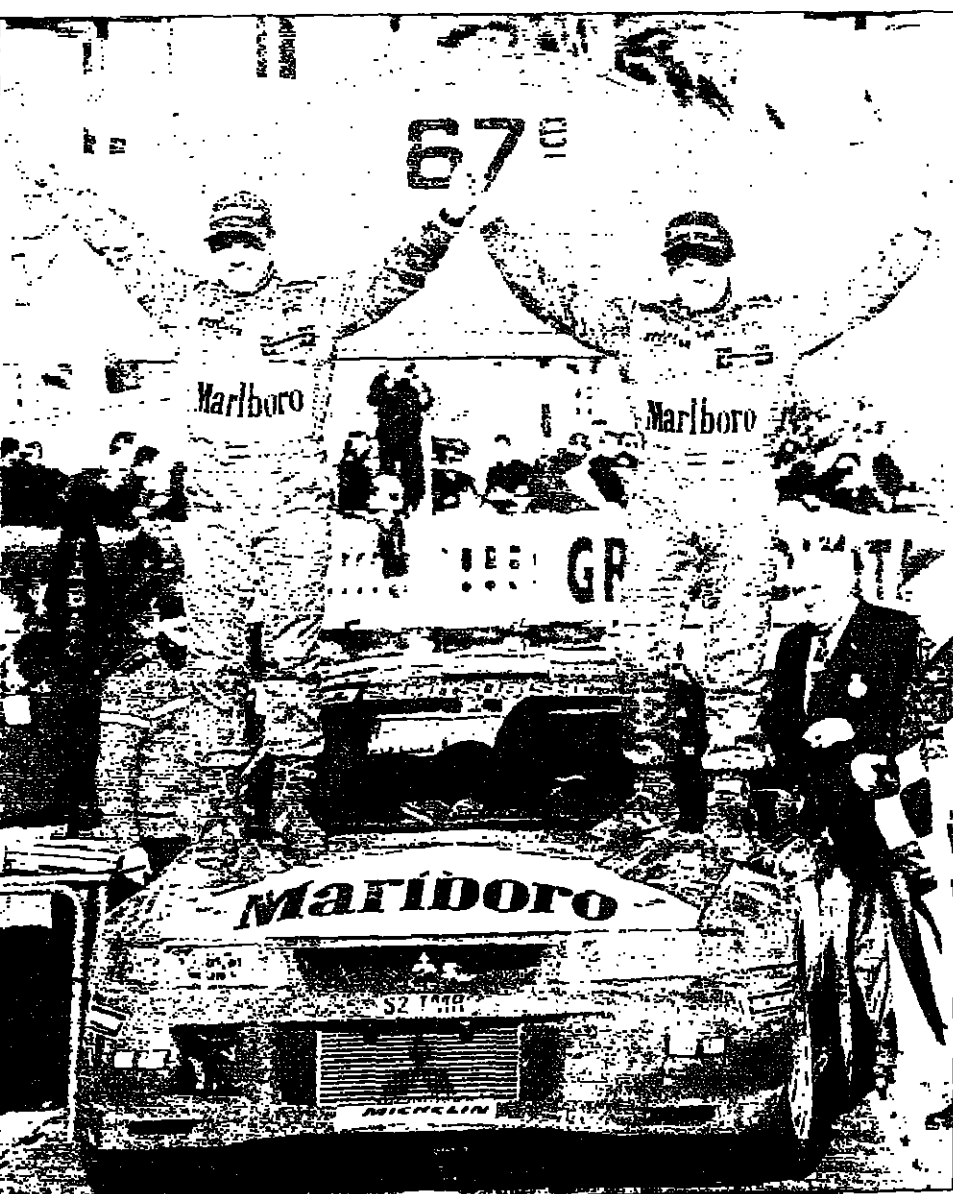
Britain's Colin Rae, the 1995 world champion making his Ford debut, came third, with a time of 4 hours, 37 minutes, 30.7 seconds.

Belgium's Bruno Thiry came in fourth, and Francois Delecour of France was fifth.

The three-day race consisted of five stages between Gap and Monaco. It was the first of 14 world rally competitions this year.

France's Gilles Panizzi, second overnight, was forced to pull out during Wednesday's final stage.

Defending champion Carlos Sainz dropped out within five miles of the start on Monday.



Tommi Makinen, right, and his co-driver Risto Mannisenmaki from Finland, driving a Mitsubishi Lancer, jubilate after winning the 67th Monte-Carlo Rally, at Monaco, Wednesday January 20, 1999 (AP photo)

Winners of last 10 Monte Carlo rallies

Van Gaal roasted by Catalan media

BARCELONA (AFP) — Under-fire Barcelona coach Louis Van Gaal has been fiercely criticised in the Catalan media Wednesday after getting involved in a political row, following the signing of Holland international twin brothers Frank and Ronald De Boer from Ajax of Amsterdam.

The reigning Spanish champions now have eight Dutch players on the staff, alongside Van Gaal and two of his assistants, bringing the total number of Dutch personnel to 11 in a club that is seen as a standard bearer for the Catalan identity.

The club has been derided in the Spanish media as Ajax Barcelona and Hollandbarea.

President of the Catalan autonomous government Jordi Pujol, while stressing it was not his job to tell Barcelona who to buy, said he hoped the club would sign more Catalan players.

Van Gaal, clearly unhappy at the criticism, hit back, saying: "Jordi Pujol is responsible for this club?" But the Catalan media clearly sympathises with its president.

Barcelona-based sports paper Sport said: "The exquisite delicacy with which Pujol expressed his disappointment with the sporting politics of Barcelona was met with a disproportionate reply by Van Gaal."

"Van Gaal's aggressive tone reflects his well-known intolerance and has again offered a detestable, haughty and defiant image, but this time in respect of the president (of Catalonia)."

Sport published a survey in which 71 per cent of Barca fans said they wanted more Catalan players at the Nou Camp. While 74.4 per cent thought the foreign players were not of high enough standard, 63.2 per cent claimed the club had lost part of its identity. And 77 per cent questioned Van Gaal's sincerity - last year he pledged to win the Champions' League with a mainly Catalan side.

The football club's president Jose Luis Nunez said Monday, when he paraded the De Boer twins, that he had no misgivings about the large Dutch contingent at the club.

Fair Play awards for Iran, U.S. and Northern Ireland

ZURICH (R) — Iran, the United States and Northern Ireland were jointly awarded FIFA's 1998 Fair Play prize on Wednesday.

World soccer's governing body gave the award to Iran and the United States for their show of sportsmanship in a highly charged World Cup match in Lyon on June 21.

The Northern Ireland Football Association was awarded a share of the prize for their "continuing efforts to reunite the Catholic and Protestant communities", said FIFA in a statement.

FIFA praised the fact that on November 30 a match between Cliftonville and Linfield, clubs identified as being on either side of the sectarian divide, took place at Cliftonville's Solitude Stadium for the first time in almost 30 years.

FIFA President Sepp Blatter said the award to

the three was proof of football's role as a mediating force.

"In the middle of the World Cup the Iranians and the Americans provided a powerful demonstration of the effects of fair play when they not only joined in the spirit of FIFA's Fair Play Day on June 21 by posing together for the photographers before their match in Lyon, but also exchanged flowers and gifts among the players," Blatter said.

"The award, like that to Northern Ireland, is also intended to be symbolic for many other countries which have found themselves in a comparable situation."

The awards will be presented at the World Player of the Year gala in Barcelona on February 1.

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U.N. releases \$81m for Iraq's electricity sector

BAGHDAD (AFP) — The U.N. Sanctions Committee has released \$81.7 million in funding for Iraq's electricity sector from the "oil-for-food" accord, the United Nations announced on Wednesday.

The Sanctions Committee has approved a total of 17 contracts, some dating back to the third phase of the six-monthly humanitarian accord launched in December 1996.

The single largest contract, worth \$74.9 million, is for six gas turbine generators from China.

Power cuts of several hours are a common feature of daily life in sanctions-hit Iraq. The oil-for-food accord aims to ease the hardships of the U.N. embargo slapped on Baghdad for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Under the accord, Iraq is authorised to export a fixed value of

crude to finance imports of food, medicine and other humanitarian goods. The fifth phase of the programme started at the end of November.

The U.N. statement on Wednesday also noted that \$16.7 million have been set aside from phase four for high protein biscuits and therapeutic milk, but Iraq has yet to submit contracts for approval by the Sanctions Committee.

The New York Times reported last week that Iraq, while protesting that U.N. sanctions were killing some 9,000 children each month, was not making full use of the humanitarian accord.

Baghdad, meanwhile, has complained that several sectors were being deprived of supplies under phase four because the United States was working within the Sanctions Committee to hold up Iraq's contracts

with foreign suppliers.

The sectors named were electricity, oil, communications, transport, water and education.

The U.N. statement said a total of \$140.6 million worth of import contracts for spare parts for Iraq's battered oil industry have been approved for phase four.

Contracts put on hold by the Sanctions Committee amount to almost \$52 million, it said.

At the end of December, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan urged the Security Council to process all Iraq's contracts for oil industry spare parts "as expeditiously as possible."

Independent experts have assessed that the Iraqi oil industry, although pumping at full capacity, is "in a lamentable state," he said.



LENIN IN STORAGE: Svetlana Khodakovskaya, an expert at the state museum of political history of Russia in St. Petersburg, Wednesday adjusts a tag on a bust of Vladimir Lenin in the museum's storage reserve. Russia's Communist Party returned to its roots on Wednesday with a tribute to Lenin on the 75th anniversary of his death and said a triumph of socialism remains inevitable (Reuters photo)

Israelis plead not guilty to spying on Cyprus

LARNACA (R) — Two Israelis charged with spying on Cyprus repeated their not guilty plea at the start of their trial on Wednesday in a case which has strained relations between Israel and the east Mediterranean island.

Sitting emotionless in the dock as police presented sophisticated gadgets they say were found on the pair, crew-cut Igal Damary and Udi Hargov denied charges of conspiring to spy on the island-state.

Hargov, 37, and Damary, 49, were arrested at their leased seaside apartment on Nov. 7 with listening equipment authorities say was used for spying. The pair have been in custody since.

The accused looked relaxed as they entered the courtroom, for the first time without handcuffs and holding silver worry beads.

They denied the charges of conspiracy, spying and possession of banned listening equipment at another appearance last month but were called to repeat their plea on the conspiracy charge after prosecutors amended its wording.

Authorities made the charge more general from its previous wording, which restricted the conspiracy to a charge of only spying on military facilities. The change was made with court permission after it rejected an objection from defence.

"With the equipment in their possession they had the capability of monitoring not only National Guard (army) but police frequencies and other government departments," said Prosecutor George Papaioannou.

The charge of spying carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison.

Israel has denied the two were spying on Cyprus and diplomatic sources said Nicosia is under considerable pressure to drop the case.

Israel has stopped short of saying that the men were employed by an intelligence agency but former Prime Minister Shimon Peres, on a visit to Cyprus last month, said the two were working to prevent a "terrorist" act against the Jewish state by Muslims. He did not elaborate.

Police submitted a laptop computer, diskettes, three radio scanners, portable phones, cassette recorders and wiring they said was recovered from the defendants' apartment in the southern coastal village of Zygi.

Israeli experts will be in Cyprus this week to examine the exhibits, their lawyer said. He declined to specify who

the experts were when asked by journalists.

Cypriot authorities say the two accused had scanners tuned into restricted police radio frequencies when they were arrested and one of them had been seen loitering outside a military base in the region the day before their detention.

The charge sheet accuses the two of "collecting information on the military installations of Cyprus which could be useful to another state." It does not say which state and police have refused to speculate.

Cyprus police say the offences allegedly committed by the two cover the period between Oct. 15 to Nov. 6 — the first date referring to another visit by the two to the island which coincided with a large scale military exercise by Greek and Greek Cypriot armed forces.

Netanyahu suggests office break-ins are a set-up

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu suggested Wednesday that burglaries at the Washington offices of political strategists for his main rival may have been set up to embarrass him.

"I don't think a failing government can use or somehow improve from... papers," Barak told the radio. "Someone is in a serious panic if he is willing to pay so much money so that people will carry out criminal break-ins."

For the second time in a week, burglars broke in Tuesday to the Washington offices of U.S. pollster Stanley Greenberg and reportedly took information related to Ehud Barak's campaign for the prime ministership.

"We witness, suddenly, a second break-in. The first was absurd but the second, in the same place, occurred while the FBI was watching," Netanyahu told Israel Radio. "I hope that we aren't dealing with political provocations whose intent is to create false accusations."

Barak said after that he wasn't worried that the stolen material could dam-

age him.

Barak's campaign manager, Tal Silberstein, said "it's too much of a coincidence" for the break-ins in Washington and Israel not to be related.

Elections have been called for May 17. Burglars in Washington managed overnight Monday to get past a new, more comprehensive security system Greenberg Quinlan Research Inc. offices near Capitol Hill.

The system was installed after burglars entered through the roof last week, taking confidential records, a laptop and other items, according to police.

The firm also has advised U.S. President Bill Clinton, South African President Nelson Mandela, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder.

reported break-ins at their homes and offices over the past few months.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Russia silent on Ocalan location

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia's foreign ministry refused Wednesday to comment on a Turkish newspaper report that Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan is hiding out at an airbase in central Russia. The daily Turkish newspaper Hurriyet said Ocalan has been at a military airbase in Nizhny Novgorod, located about 400 kilometres east of Moscow, since he left Rome last week. The foreign ministry would not comment, but said it planned to release a statement about Ocalan on Thursday. It did not say what the statement's contents would be. Russian officials have repeatedly denied that Ocalan is in the country, but at the same time have said Russia would not be obligated to turn him over to Turkey since the two countries don't have an extradition treaty.

Iraqi opposition seeks Arab League support

DUBAI (AFP) — Iraqi opposition groups called Wednesday for Arab foreign ministers at a Cairo meeting on Jan. 24 to throw their weight behind efforts to topple President Saddam Hussein. The call came in a statement signed by 47 opposition leaders, but not the Kurdish factions which control northern Iraq in defiance of Baghdad. The statement, received here, called for the Arab ministers "to support opposition actions to finish off the bloodthirsty and dictatorial regime, and to allow the Iraqi people to choose their regime freely." The opposition asked the Cairo meeting "to take diplomatic action toward tightening the embargo against the regime, while lifting those sanctions which affect the people."

Murderers of Iranian dissidents to face trial

TEHRAN (AFP) — The alleged murderers of Iranian intellectuals and dissidents will be put on public trial shortly, a military official announced Wednesday. "They will be tried in public and can have a defence lawyer," a prosecutor of the Tehran military tribunal Mohammad Niazi said in an interview broadcast on state television. The authorities say 10 people have been arrested in connection with the murders of nationalist opposition leader Daryush Foruhar, his wife, Parvaneh, and two writers. The murders have been blamed on rogue intelligence ministry agents and a military court is presently investigating the case. Niazi said however that the murderers "had acted without the knowledge of their superiors at the intelligence ministry."

Iran opposition figure receives death threats

TEHRAN (AFP) — An Iranian opposition figure said Wednesday he had been receiving death threats in the wake of the recent spate of murders of dissidents and intellectuals in Iran. Habibollah Peyman, a strong critic of the Islamic regime, sent a letter to Interior Minister Abdul Vahed Musavi Lari saying he had received threats that he would be shot in the head, newspapers reported. The 55-year-old dissident said his family had also been threatened in mysterious letters and phone calls.

'Hostages in Yemen may be freed soon'

SANAA (AFP) — A Dutch family of four and a British couple held hostage in Yemen could be released soon, a Netherlands diplomat said Wednesday. Pieter Dorst, deputy head of mission at the Netherlands embassy, said the authorities had indicated that the kidnapping should soon be over. "Everyone is optimistic that it won't take any longer," he said. "We keep our fingers crossed. They [the authorities] told us so." Dorst added: "We have indications from the authorities that they are treated well."

'Algerian rebels kill 16 soldiers in two ambushes'

ALGIERS (R) — Islamist rebels killed 16 soldiers and wounded 11 in two ambushes in Algeria, local newspapers reported on Wednesday.

Islamist militants set off a roadside bomb as vehicles carrying soldiers passed near Draa Al Mizan area in Tizi-Ouzou province, 90 kms east of Algiers, said La Tribune daily.

As the bomb exploded, rebels hiding on both sides of the road machinegunned the soldiers, killing nine of them, it said.

The attack took place on Sunday, La Tribune added.

In a similar ambush, rebels killed seven soldiers and wounded 11 others overnight Saturday/Sunday in Tagdempt area in Tiaet region, 220 kms southwest of Algiers, Le Matin newspaper said.

There was no immediate confirmation of the reports from the authorities who are tight-lipped on casualties among government forces.

More than 40 soldiers were

reported killed in rebel ambushes last year. The deadliest attack was last December when rebels shot dead at least 14 soldiers in an ambush in Oran area.

La Nouvelle Republique daily said on Wednesday troops have killed 96 rebels in several operations across Algeria during the Holy Month of Ramadan, which ended on Monday.

At least five civilians were killed when rebels slit their throats at a fake roadblock on Saturday in Bouira area, some 80 kms east of Algiers, said La Tribune on Wednesday.

Algeria has been racked by violence since early 1992 when the authorities cancelled a general election in which radical Islamists had taken a commanding lead.

More than 65,000 people — civilians, rebels and members of the government forces — have been killed in the seven years of strife in the North African country, according to Western estimates.

London-based Islamist warns Westerners to quit Yemen

LONDON (R) — A Islamist cleric linked to a spate of kidnappings and arrests in Yemen on Wednesday urged all Westerners to leave the country or risk "coming back in a coffin."

Abu Hamza Al Masri, of the London-based Supporters of Sharia (Islamic law), used a rare news conference to deny that his group was a vehicle for military action but demanded that "all Muslim groups rise and join hands to free the Yemeni people from the oppression of the Yemeni government."

Masri, an engineer who lost an eye and both hands in combat in Afghanistan and Bosnia, said his stepson was among a group of five Britons being held on terrorist charges in Yemen and said his son was also being held by the authorities.

He confirmed having had contacts with the leader of a kidnap gang that abducted 16 Western tourists in December but denied having sent the five Britons now under arrest to Yemen to carry out bombings.

"There is no direct connection with me. One is my stepson but I was not aware he was in Yemen. I am not cooperating with these people. They have not gone there with our permission or support," he said.

Yemen's foreign minister last week expressed concern to Britain over what he called "dangerous statements" by Masri to the British media and to Qatari television.

The Egyptian-born preacher said on Wednesday he had been under surveillance in Britain for some time and expected to be arrested.

"My phone is tapped... I wouldn't be surprised if I were arrested. I don't believe it is a big price to pay to go to prison. I want to speak out," he said.

Masri said the recent spate of hostage taking in Yemen was a direct protest against what he

claimed was the use by Britain and the United States of the port of Aden as a refuelling base in December's four day bombardment of Iraq.

All Westerners in Yemen were now at risk, he said, adding that his news conference was intended as a warning to travellers there.

"I would rather argue with you here and have you stay safe than for you to go to Yemen and come back in a coffin," he told journalists. "It is your duty to tell people to stay away."

Masri said the two elderly Britons and the Dutch family of four who were kidnapped on Sunday in northern Yemen may be held by Islamic militants but said he had had no contact with them.

"These people [the hostages] might be double agents," he said. "What were they doing there? They are deliberately ignoring the message we are giving out."

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Talking doll astonishes Swedish family

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — A six-year-old Swedish boy thinks he got a great bargain when his parents bought him an "action man" doll that appears to pick up stray mobile phone conversations. "Are you drunk already in the afternoon, Haakan?" the doll of Fredrik Trygg said loud and clear as it sat in the Trygg family's kitchen in Norrköping, Sweden, TT news agency reported Wednesday. This astonished the family as the popular boy's dolls do not talk. After the incident the doll kept quiet for a while. Then, suddenly, it said it needed to know how much milk to buy, and what kind of milk it should be.

Dog owners charged fee in Russian town

MOSCOW (AFP) — It's a dog's life in the industrial Russian town of Chelyabinsk, where man's best friends from now on will be charged rent. Owners of dogs living in this city 900 kilometres east of Moscow have been slapped with a 20 U.S. cent monthly rental fee for the privilege of enjoying the local water and electricity. Kommersant reported Wednesday. Chelyabinsk officials did not require cats, birds or goldfish to pay any rent at all, he said. The rent for dogs was set at one-eighth that paid by people because "animals are not quite human," Kommersant said.

When pigs fly...

PAW PAW (AP) — Animals are refusing to sell a ticket to the star performer in Debbie and Alicia Jacobs' vaudequinism act — Pork Chop, a 6-kilo Vietnamese potbellied pig. "I just want to know why," Pork Chop apparently mouthed Tuesday from Alicia's lap. "Why can't I fly? I don't need no first class. I just want to fly with Alicia and Debbie." That may prove difficult after American Airlines' decision last summer to ban porcine passengers from its seats. Now only small dogs and cats in special carrying cases can fly in the passenger cabin. Airline representatives have said Pork Chop is always welcome in the baggage compartment, but the Jacobs worry she might not be safe there.

Napoleon's letters found in drug raid

MADRID (AFP) — Two letters written by Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte as well as 17th and 18th century papal edicts were found by police pursuing suspected British hashish traffickers in Spain, El Pais reported Wednesday. Police discovered the historic manuscripts in a safe during a May 1997 raid on a villa in eastern Spain, but investigating judge Baltasar Garçon had kept the information secret until this week, the paper said. Both written in 1813, one letter was written by Napoleon to Eugene, the son that his wife Josephine had during her first marriage to vicount Alexandre Beauharnais.

Pluto may be demoted from 'planet'

ALBUQUERQUE (AP) — Poor Pluto — its days as one of our solar system's nine major planets may be numbered. Two groups within the International Astronomical Union are thinking about reclassifying the relatively puny planet, either calling it a "minor planet" or lumping it in with an entirely new class of objects. "For at least 20 years it's been obvious that Pluto doesn't fit," said University of Maryland astronomer David A'Hearn, who heads the Planetary Systems Division of the International Astronomical Union.

Islamic Jihad leader released

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian authorities have released a leader of the Islamic group who was arrested last month for calling for the assassination of Bill Clinton. The U.S. president's visit to the Gaza Strip, sources said Friday, is ahead of Clinton's speech to the U.S. House of Representatives. Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sharif, a prominent Islamic leader, would be very likely to be released during his visit to

Romanian protests
Two ethnic
Romanians killed
Woman fined for
protest against
Iraq bombings
Ex-Pentagon
lawyer convicted
of spying
Freetown
archbishop
flees captors
Islamic Jihad
leader released